

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL AWAKENING AMONG THE TRIBALS OF RAJASTHAN

Edited by
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INTRODUCTION

In Rajasthan there has been no break in the continuity of civilization from the Kalibanga to our own time. This aspect is represented by the useful role of the tribals, the Bhils, Meenas, Sahariayas etc. who occupied the South-Western, South-Eastern and North-Eastern hilly and wild belts of the region. Unfortunately, there is nothing here today, except archaeological remains, to remind us of their pre-historic culture. However, a study of their life and actions unfold through the centuries a panorama of interesting men and events, of their changing moods and situations.

When the Rajputs entered Rajasthan, during the early medieval age, and established their political power over the fertile and defended parts of Rajasthan, their conquests upset the age old position and possessions of the tribals. They were driven to the forests and hilly regions with frugal means to survive. This state of affairs left them at the mercy of nature and led to the creation of a wide gulf between the town-dwellers and forest-dwellers. Nevertheless, there was no sudden break in the continuity of their institutions and culture.

With the challenge of the Turks and the Mughals to the political authority of the Rajputs, a new era dawned. Importance of the tribals was realized by the Rajputs and they were brought nearer to their leaders by alliances and compromises. Happily they agreed to fight against the common enemies and established their challenging superiority in weapons and war. The successes of Rana Pratap and Durgadas largely rested on these trusted warriors of the soil.

When the British imperialism had its sway over the Chiefs of Rajasthan from 1818 onwards and subsequent encroachments over the traditional rights of the tribals took place, there began the phase of irritation. These patriotic freelancers were provoked to radical violence for the cause of their liberty and glorious past. The effective leadership of Govind Giri and Motilal Tejavat inspired their heroism for retaining and serving the original vision of unity. They boldly reacted to the situation, flinging away their lives for freedom.

It is the purpose of this little volume to bring home to the readers the creative role of the tribals for whom liberty and freedom are dearest ideals of their life.

The present volume is mainly a collection of papers presented at the Seminar organised under the auspices of the Centre for Rajasthan Studies at Jaipur, in 1985. We have the satisfaction of including substantial features of the contribution of the tribals towards the liberation of their land.

We take the opportunity to express our deepest gratitude to our Vice-Chancellor Professor R.P. Agrawal who by extending financial help to the Centre for Rajasthan Studies encouraged us to hold the Seminar and publish its proceedings in this form.

I am also grateful to Prof. K.D. Bajpai, the reputed scholar of Ancient History and Culture, who presided over the Seminar. I am also grateful to the contributors of papers, whose co-operation has rendered this publication possible. Our thanks are also due to Prof. V.S. Bhatnagar and Dr. V.K. Vashishtha for the invaluable help they have rendered in the organization of the seminar and in the preparation of this volume. Finally, I am thankful to Shri C.R. Pareek, Manager, Rajasthan University Press and his staff for seeing the volume through the Press despite their heavy schedule of work.

Jaipur

G.N. Sharma

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

PROFESSOR K.D. BAJPAI

Respected Prof. Sharma, Prof. Bhatnagar and learned participants

I am very grateful to you for kindly asking me to inaugurate this Seminar on a topic of absorbing interest. I feel diffident to perform this task before a gathering of distinguished scholars, several of whom have done appreciable work on various facets of the history and culture of the tribals in Rajasthan.

During the last several years, I have kept myself in touch with the activities of the Centre for Rajasthan Studies. It is indeed commendable that inspite of the paucity of funds and other drawbacks, the Centre has made appreciable progress in the fields of research and publication. I thank the Rajasthan Government and the University of Rajasthan for their patronage to the Centre. It is hoped that in the near future more facilities will be made available to the Centre to enable it to achieve its objectives. I take this opportunity to congratulate Professor Dr. Gopinath Sharma, Director of the Centre, and his devoted associates, who have been working hard to justify the importance of the Centre for the advancement of historical studies.

The present seminar has been organised on *Social and Political Awakening among the Tribals of Rajasthan*. The historical analysis of the progress of the tribals in this part of the country bristles with several problems in regard to their socio-economic set-up, religious beliefs and political consciousness.

The present total tribal population of Rajasthan has been estimated at 41.83 lakhs, i.e. about 12.21% of the entire population of the state. The State Departments concerned with the development-activities of the tribals have done useful work during the period of Independence. Some valuable work on the Bhils, the Mīnās, the Girāsīās, the Saharīās and other tribes has been done by several scholars. Among such scholars mention may be made of C.E. Luard, G.N. Sharma, T.B. Naik, S. L. Joshi and others.

So far the work on the Tribals has chiefly been done by anthropologists and sociologists. Their ethnological character and ways of life have been studied by several Indian and foreign scholars. The study of the folk cultures has been recognised as an integral part of history. The origin of tribals, their archaic social patterns, their development and the contacts of tribals with other classes of the society—these and other allied problems fall within the scope of history.

A study of the present-day position of the tribals in Rajasthan reveals that they have come out from their closed moorings of the past. Their contact with the developed classes of society have been proved fruitful in various ways. The steps taken by the welfare State towards their education and social upliftment have made the tribals appreciate the advantages of science and technology. The studies in regard to the history of different tribes, their relations with the ruling the business and the peasant classes, their socio-political organisation, their arts and crafts and the contribution made by them to Indian history and culture offer sumptuous material to the historian.

We know a good deal about the Imperial Guptas, the Vardhanas the Pratihāras, the Tomaras, the Chahamānas and the Gāhaḍvālas. But little is known about the Gonds who once built up an extensive kingdom, extending from Deogarh in the Vindhya region up to the Chanda district in Maharashtra and from east Nimar to the Shahdol district in Madhya Pradesh. The Gonds were responsible for the growth of several towns, such as Jabalpur, Mandla, Betul, Balaghat, Seoni and Nagpur. The Gond ruler Sangrām Shāh was the master of a large number of forts and castles. He is known to have issued gold and copper coins. The achievements of the brave Gond queen Durgāvati form a brilliant chapter in the history of the medieval period. Such is the case with a few other tribes of the ancient and medieval period. In ancient Rajasthan, the Yaudheyas and the Mālavas wielded considerable power for quite a long time. They issued their independent coins.

In the hoary past, several parts of Rajasthan and the contiguous region of Madhya Pradesh were inhabited by primitive tribes, called the Bhillas, the Nishādas, the Ābhīras, the Śābaras, the Pulindas, etc. In the prehistoric times these people lived mostly in natural rock-shelters, which are found in a considerably large number in the valleys of Chambal, Betwā, Narmadā and their tributaries. The archaic cave-men sustained on the roots and fruits of trees and the flesh of animals and birds, which abounded in these river valleys. Some of the cave-men, having a rudimentary knowledge of painting, used to paint the walls and

roofs of their shelters with red, ochre, green or yellow colours depicting interesting scenes of their wild life.

During the last about twenty years a very large number of painted rock-shelters have been discovered in the river valleys of Chambal, Betwā and Narmadā. Archaeological field work recently conducted in some of the shelters has brought to light important relics bearing on the culture of the primitive people inhabiting them. The pre— and proto-historic paintings, found in the rock shelters, throw some light on the socio-economic life of the cave people and also on the early pictorial art. Some of the paintings bear Brāhmī inscriptions and also interesting symbols, such as *ghaṭa*, *swastika*, sun, moon, stars and tree-in-railing. Similar symbols occur on the early punch-marked and tribal coins, seals and sealings. A few of them are also found on the plastic and pictorial art of the historical times. Several of the pre- and protohistoric traits are still traceable in the tribal cultures.

This plentiful interesting evidence of rock-paintings can be assigned to a considerably wide range of period, from the pre-historic times to about the 14th century A.D. The scenes portrayed in most of the shelters show various types of animals, birds, snakes (and other reptiles), rivers, trees, hunting scenes and animal fights. Domestic life of the cave men is also represented in the paintings through music, dance, fire-worship, honey-collecting, etc. It is interesting to note that the evolution of the forest society is discernible in the rock-paintings. The aspects of individual dwellings, of a community of small groups and, later on, of much larger groups can be gleaned after a study of these paintings.

During the proto-historic times, when the construction of hut and mud-houses was known, the dwellers of rock-shelters came into contact with the villagers, who were usually settled on the banks of rivers. This gradually resulted in transactions of articles between the foresters and the village-people. In some of the rock-paintings are seen interesting depictions of carriers of *behangīs* (Sanskrit *Vihangikās*) used for carrying articles to some distant places. In quite a good number of rock paintings are portrayed different types of weapons and other implements, which were used by the cave-dwellers. Such weapons have been discovered in several caves.

Various types of folk entertainments were arranged in rock shelters and open air theatres. Some inscriptions refer to *Śabarotsavas* (the festivals of the primitive Śabara people). The Brāhmī inscriptions at Ramgarh (Rāmagiri of Kālidāsa) in the Surguja district of Madhya

Pradesh refer to a proficient dramatist (*rūpadaksa*), called Devadatta, and to his lady companion, *Devadāsī* Sutanukā. Here we come across the earliest epigraphical reference to a Devadāsī, who participated in the dramatic performances. The inscriptions are incised on the walls and ceilings of the theatre hewn out of a rock at Ramagarh. Below it, are carved stairs in a descending order, to provide seating arrangement for the audience.

Kālidāsa has referred to the rock shelters in the lower hillocks near Vidisha (*Meghadūta*, I, 25). Some of these shelters were used by youthful lovers and their consorts for their amorous dalliances.

It may be observed here that the tribals of Rajasthan, like the majority of tribals of Madhya Pradesh and most of those residing in other areas of the country, have a liking for the Vedic-Purāṇic way of life. This has been a traditional trait in them, the antiquity of which can be traced back to the proto-historic times. The Bhīls, the Gīrāsīās, the Sahariās and several other tribes worship Śiva, Devī, Rāma, Kṛishṇa, Hanumān, etc. Their hero-songs pertain to these deities and to several heroes of their region of the medieval and modern times.

The Prakrit Jain works, such as *Gāhākosa*, the *Samarāicca-Kahā*, and the *Vajjālagga*, give some fascinating accounts of the tribals of Rajasthan and Central India. These accounts throw interesting light on the life of the tribals.

I formally inaugurate the Seminar and hope that the discussions on the subject will be highly fruitful.

TRIBALS OF RAJASTHAN

SOCIAL REFORMS AND POLITICAL AWAKENING

DR. G.N. SHARMA

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The early history, the attitude and behaviour of the tribals prior to the 7th century are much more obscure. Of course, a survey of the Banās and its tributaries, the Gambhirī, the Berāch, the Āhar, the Wagan and the regions of Chambal and Darbhāvati has shown that men lived along the banks of these rivers at least 10,00,000 years ago, and used tools of the paleolithic type and maintained themselves on wild fruits and roots and the flesh of animals, which roamed the forests near the foothills. They belonged to the nomadic culture living on hunting and fishing.¹

As we come to the age of the river culture, a variety of finds—beads, blades, weights, jars, lids, furnaces, copper-pieces, etc. recovered in the process of excavations at the Āhār, Akalgarh, Ganeshwar, Kalibangan, etc. indicate the wealth of material equipment and manufacturing skill of the residents. That the artists of the Āhār valley had full grasp of essential elements of form and decoration is apparent in the patterns and symbols used in the pottery and seals. These and other sites go to prove that hidden and remote regions of Rajasthan happened to be the centre of a great culture of the world.²

With the beginning of the 4th century B.C. the glimpses relating to the life and living of the tribals become somewhat distinct. From the Śibi coins and the invasion of the Bactrians, we may rightly infer that Madhyamikā was an important urban centre and the inhabitants in and around it were well associated with the descendants of Śakas, Śuṅgas and Andhras.³

1. H.D. Sankalia, *Beginning of Civilization in Rajasthan*. pp. 220-230.

2. Dr. Dashrath Sharma, *Rajasthan Through The Ages*, pp. 34-38.

3. *Pantanjali Mahābhāshya*.

As we proceed further to the age of the Mauryas and the Guptas the forests abounding around Alwar, Chitor and Sarada hills of south were the most important settlements of the tribals—better known as Bhīls and Mīnās. Kishkindhāpur, modern Kalyānpur, was a cultural centre. During these early periods, there lived in the hilly and dense forest region of Alwar, Ūparmal hills, and Bohamat region, dark-skinned people such as Bhīls, Mīnās, Mers, Medas, and Sahariyās, who were either the tillers of soil or hunters by occupation. Their occupational activity of brigandage disturbed the normal living in the neighbouring settlements. These activities brought them recognition of their power and capacity to create terror.

The area thus covered by their habitations stretched from North to South and West to East, separating them by vast stretches of forest and high hills. This kind of distribution led to their growth as a mere sprinkling of tribes, but united by a common occupational and family likeness. This kind of isolation made their habitations assume the form of scattered collections of hamlets as independent units, bowing to no other authority but to their unit commonly called *pāl*—a group of habitations bound by their own traditions and discipline. These *pāls* had their own leaders whose duty was to defend the regions and decide their mutual disputes.⁴

From the 6th century A.D., onwards the adventurous bands of the Rajputs carried their arms successfully through the regions of Maru, Mad, Medpāt and Mer regions encountering and dislodging or driving away the early inhabitants to the hills. From this time desperate struggle between the aboriginals and new comers commenced, resulting in the victory of one and reversion of power of the other. During this period of trial and triumph, reversion and reoccupation, many a leader and their followers died in action in defence of their rights over the lands they were occupying. Chanting the dirge of the dead warriors, singing and dancing in their memories and unifying their units for defence became a common feature of their life. There emerged guerilla war and age of arrows and bows. From this age, the history of tribals took a new turn. They were no more nomads but permanent settlers with their civil and political organizations, supported and nurtured on the booty collected from the neighbouring areas. The writer of *Samarāchhikahā* well narrates their habits and behaviour which was appropriate for the occasion, and the age in which they lived and thrived.⁵

4. Raychaudhari, *History of Mewar*. p. 15.

5. *Samarāchhikahā*, pp. 305-305.

Let us now turn to the socio-economic consequences of the struggle and settlements. Right from the 6th century to 12th century, there were struggles between the aborigines and the Guhilots, Hadas, Kacchawas and Rathors in their respective regions. The natural result was that vast areas in these regions were occupied in course of time. Both sides stood as aggressors and defenders for many generations, a conflict which ended in the tribals being reduced to semi-subjection to the superior organization. It is also not difficult to imagine that the original inhabitants were, in all probability, partly driven into the hills, and partly permitted to live side by side with the conquerors, enjoying independent status.⁶

Though the conquerors and the tribals were some times on antagonistic terms their long stay and consolidating activities brought the tribals nearer to them in the long run. The Rajput chiefs of Mewar, Marwar, Hadoti and Dhundhar adopted some of their methods of war. In return, their right of holding land was recognised and they were entrusted with the task of keeping the roads safe for the wayfarers. Important forts, routes, and defence points were put in their charge and many of them were recruited in the states' armies. They came nearer to each other to the extent that the coronation ceremony of the princes of many states was not considered complete unless the *tika* mark of kingship was impressed upon the forehead of the new chief by the bleeding thumb of the hand of the Bhil leader. In the war between the Rajasthan chiefs and the Mughals, the Bhil contingents played a notable role.⁷

One significant result of the association of the tribals and the Rajput chiefs was the borrowing of language, specially in the terminology of war and agrarian life.

As both the races had their own occupied regions, there developed an atmosphere of independence among the tribals by virtue of their being forgotten by others. In the Bhil and Mina societies self-reliance, individual freedom, self-respect within the bound of the discipline of the group to which they belonged developed. Their various groups were a sort of independent units, obeying none but their group leader. Difficulties of communication, a distinctive type of social and political structure, and a religious attitude and ecclesiastical organization

6. *INSI*, HX, pp. 27-29: *EI*, XXIV, v. 139, p. 31, *Bhavmagar Ins.*, Vol. V, pp. 83-87.

7. G.N. Sharma, *Social Life in Mediaeval Rajasthan*, pp. 101-102.

of Bhopās combined to cut off their smaller and scattered units more and more from the Rajput states. While their isolation had the merit of developing among the tribals a sense of independence, it also proved harmful in introducing in their society the practice of polygamy and drinking habits. These social evils made them lethargic and envious of others. Differences arising among them deeply marked their social life leading to mutual strifes, conflicts and revengeful attitude. These features had lasting effects on their future career and prospects. These drawbacks pushed them towards backwardness.⁸

Unfortunately the Rajput chiefs never tried to make them aware of the evils effects of there vices; they rather encouraged them to stick to these habits for their own benefit. During the long duration of ten centuries, no serious attempt was made to introduce useful social reforms in this direction.

But the establishment of cantonments at Nasirabad (1818), Beawar (1822). Kherwara and Kotra (1841), Erinpura (1842) and Deoli (1857) opened opportunities for the tribals to get employment and to come in touch with urban life, manners and mode of thinking. The attempts to educate them and train them made them familiar with modern trends to some extent. Those who were outside the pale of cantonments were also engaged for keeping watch and ward over mercantile and travellers' routes in hilly regions. They were given nominal remuneration of *Bolavi* for their subsistence. The cumulative result of these aspects was that several of them came in touch with their fellow brethren who tried to imitate them in their ways of living and thinking.⁹

In spite of these changes some features of their life remained unchanged. Their love for their land and aversion to pressure and foreign domination was a second habit with them. The particular usages of the group and their warlike skill and attachment for their political rights as well as love for their lives were always with them. The *Rishbhadev Surah* throws ample light on their rights. Their sentiment have been well echoed in the songs that they sing—"Eternal Trinity ! deliver thy people from the oppression of the Pagans and from the savage nation, which lay waste realms. Deliver us, O God against the arrows of unclean hands." Let us try for a moment to imagine the state of mind of the tribals who very often utter these supplications. A society cannot with

8. *AI*, Vol. 39, p. 191.

9. Administrative Report, Ajmer Merwara, 1873-74, p. 71; Census Report of India, 1911, Vol. II.

impunity exist in a state of perpetual terror. One day or the other it will revolt against oppression.¹⁰

The opportune moment came for expressing resentment when their land was taxed and they were required to perform forced labour. The Census of 1881 was taken by them as a calculated plan to send them outside India for Frontier Wars. It was also understood in their circle that the British Government was going to assign fat women to fat men and thinner ones to thin persons. It was also surmised that extra cattle will be taken away from them to meet the needs of the people living in the towns. The establishment of police station and cess posts within their region, revision of the rates of revenue collection and introducing rules regarding prohibition of liquor and killing of *Dakins* caused resentment against the government. These measures were taken as steps to deprive them of their independence and traditional rights. The oppressive administration of the *hakims* was not liked by them. When taxes were collected from them and labour services were extorted from them for the benefit of the State or the British Government there was a strong resentment.¹¹ The result was that the Bhils of Pal, Kotda, Kherwada, Bhorai, Paduna, Bichiwada etc. rose in revolt against the atrocities of police officer of Barapal and Girdawar Dayalal Chobisa in 1882. The situation was soon out of control. The commandant of Kherwara failed to reach at any settlement with them. It was Mama Amar Singh and Kaviraj Shyamaldas who managed the mob and got inscribed the terms of settlement defending their traditional rights.¹²

As this juncture Govind Giri, a religious thinker founded *Sampa Sabha* on the pattern of the age old system of the *Panchayat*. By his qualities of leadership he harnessed their moral and physical strength to awaken the tribals of Sirohi and Vagad towards their rights and duties. He created in them a sense of self respect by hailing their hamlets as forts and their bows and arrows as invincible arms. Thus, the reform movement of Govind Giri made these tribals a bulwark against oppression and made them a moral force by introducing in them the virtues of pious life and clean habits. The movement started by him took the form of Bhagat Movement later on.¹³

10. Bhil songs—a gist.

11. AGG Letter, F. P. Nos. 51-58 1876; *Nixon Report* 1870-71.

12. *Mewar Agency Report*, 1880-81; *Vir Vinod*, II, 2217-28.

13. Vigvar, year 15, No. 1, p. 49; Jain, *Bhagat Andolan*, p. 17.

Moti Lal Tejavat who assumed the leadership of the Tribals, specially of the Bhils, infused in them a zeal for struggle for political rights. In 1921-22 differences arose between the authorities in Idar, Banswara, Bhomat, Dungarpur, Sirohi, Danta and Pratapgarh and the Bhils on the question of the mode of collection of revenue and issuing of *pattās*. In Idar and Sirohi the atrocities of the Maharaja went beyond bounds leading to massacre of people and burning of grains, cattle, and houses beyond calculation. The rising at Pratapgarh, Luharu, and tribal regions of Jodhpur and Bikaner was also directed against the high-handed policy adopted by the rulers and the Jagirdars against the tribals who were following agricultural pursuit peacefully.¹⁴

Though their demands for their rights were partially accepted, the spirit of the tribals remained unabated. Their struggle for their independence and hatred against the alien rule paved the way in this region for a major struggle that was to be waged by the leaders of Indian independence.

To sum-up we establish the following points for our consideration :

- (1) The tribal culture was a reality and not a myth.
- (2) The body of the tribals which had a mission to safeguard its old traditions, had a place for itself in social and political structure of Rajasthan.
- (3) Reform movements of Govind Giri fostered the emergence of warrior prelate in them with a moral and political background.
- (4) The resentment awakened in the hearts of the impoverished band by Tejavat led to resistance which found expression in risings which in turn served the cause of Indian Independence in the near future.

14. R.A.F.P., File No. 276, p. 1929 (NA); F.P., 1847; K.S. Saxena, pp. 185-186.

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL AWAKENING : THE BHIL MOVEMENTS IN SOUTH-WEST RAJASTHAN 1857-1947.

By

DR. K.S. SAXENA

Prior to narrating the history of the hills of South-West Rajasthan, which was characterised by political consciousness, it would be worthwhile to give a sketch of the Bhils in general because it had enough bearing on the subsequent history of the awakening in Rajasthan.

Bhils and their racial character

The Bhils¹ are a primitive people who form the third largest group of aboriginals found in India. There are numerous legends regarding the origin of these people. The Bhils are referred to in ancient Sanskrit and later 'Aparbharna' literature,² which throw light on their history and also on the attitude of other people towards these forest dwellers. The Bhils seem to be the pygmies of Ktesias (400 B.C.) who described them as 'black and ugly, the tallest being only two ells high, their hair and beards were so long that they served as garments, and they were excellent bowmen and very honest', Col. Tod calls them '*Van Putras*' or children of the forest. The Rajputs had also recognised them as the original occupants of the land. So far as the Rajasthan is concerned the Bhils had rendered a remarkable service to the Guhilot rulers of Mewar and, as a token of appreciation, the towns of Dungarpur, Banswara and Deolia were all named after Bhil Chieftains. Even in the time of Maharana Pratap, the services of the Bhils were highly commendable, and during the British rule Mewar Bhil Corps was organised in 1840 which assisted the British in suppressing the fire of Mutiny of 1857 in this part of the region.

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1. The name 'Bhil', some historians hold, is derived from the Dravidian word for a bow which is the characteristic weapon of the tribe, but others hold that it is derived from the root of the Sanskrit verb meaning 'to pierce, shoot or kill' in consequence of their proficiency as archers. Erskine, K.D. : *Rajputana Gazetteer. Mewar Residency*, 1908, Vol. II a, p. 227.
 2. *Mahabharata*; *Kirātārjunyam*; *Kādambarī* of Bana Bhatt also refers to the Bhils.

By nature, the Bhils have always been lawless and independent, fond of fighting, shy, and restless. The rulers always took them for a barbarous community and treated as if they were anti-social elements. The Bhils are very superstitious and wear charms and amulets on the right fore-arm to keep ghosts and evil spirits at a distance. They also believe religiously in witch-craft and there are Bhopās and witch finders in many villages, whose duty is to find out the woman who has caused the injury. Observing on the character of the Bhils, Captain Graham says, "The Bhils are the most uncivilized of all the wild tribes, with intellect barely sufficient to understand, and totally unequal to comprehend anything beyond the most simple communication, and with forms stunted by hardships, the bad climate, and the bitter poverty in which they are steeped."³ According to the current legends, "Bhil is the king of the Jungle, his arrows fly straight. He is always ready for a fight but he is also a man of his word and so is a safe escort. If you manage to please him he is a Bhil, if you rub him the wrong way up he is the son of a dog".⁴

The Bhils have shown a tendency to disrespect law and order. They have often voiced their feelings against an alien government and have resorted to violence at all times against it. They rose against the Marathas in the 18th Century and were severely punished. They revolted against the British in 1800 but the diplomacy of Col. Tod succeeded, and on May 12, 1825, Bhils entered into an agreement with the East India Company.

New Reforms and the Bhil Risings

As soon as the British Govt. took over the administration from the East India Company on Nov. 1, 1858, a number of reforms were introduced in British India as well as in Indian states on British India pattern. These reforms in a way proved to be checks on the rights enjoyed by the Bhils. In 1868, therefore, the Bhils of Kharwar *Pāl* in the hilly district of Mewar indulged in lawless activities and began to defy the state authorities. At last the Maharaja had to send his troops to suppress them.

In the year 1881, a number of reforms were introduced among the Bhils. The main reforms were the introduction of Census, the prohibition on the manufacture of liquor and the practice of farming out liquor contract to one man, establishment of police or Customs post in the Bhil areas, ban on witch swinging which ultimately led to the official

3. Graham : *The Bhil Tribes of Khandesh*, p. 3.

4. *Bhilon ke Lok Geet*.

interference in Bhil area and with their age long customs and conventions. These reforms led to dissatisfaction among the Bhils as it was found difficult to make them understand the object and advantages of these reforms. Various types of doubts were raised and rumours were spread as soon as the implementation of reforms was undertaken by the state officials. Some thought that the introduction of census was an attempt for the gradual elimination of the Bhil population, others thought that fat women would be assigned to stout men and the lanky to the lean etc. The introduction of these reforms, therefore, provoked the Bhils and led to the general uprising of 1881. However, as a result of the Maharana's personal intervention, an agreement was concluded on April 19, 1981 practically accepting all the demands of the Bhils and virtually postponing the stipulated reforms.

But inspite of the agreement, peace could not be restored immediately and the disturbances continued; ultimately they were suppressed with a heavy hand.

Moti Lal Tejawat and the Bhils

In the year 1921-22 again a number of Bhil disturbances occurred in the districts of Mewar, Idar, Dungarpur, Sirohi and other places. The main cause was the different system of land revenue and *pattās* enforced in the aforesaid states. Their principal demand was to abolish the different systems of taxation and to replace them by one uniform system. In January 1922 and onward a lead came from Moti Lal Tejawat who made them conscious of their rights and prepared them to take a stand against the authorities. Moti Lal Tejawat collected about 5,000 Bhils at Poshina; of these 1800 were armed with muzzle loading guns. In fact all the Bhils of Mewar, Sirohi, Doongarpur etc. joined him and organised a rebellion, This was the first-time when all the Bhils under the leadership of Moti Lal Tejawat could rise against the states and the British Govt. Bhils looked upon him as their veritable 'Messiah' who had come for their eternal deliverance. But the States and the British Govt. looked at the agitation as a challenge to their authority. The Idar Darbar issued a proclamation banning the 'gathering of Bhils' and the entry of Moti Lal Tejawat, and declared it to be an offence to give him shelter or protection.

Meanwhile, on behalf of Mahatma Gandhi, Mani Lal Kothari was sent to Sirohi who could successfully persuade Moti Lal Tejawat and Mr. Holland, the A.G.G. in Rajasthan, for negotiations. But the State and the British Govt. did not fulfil their promise and the Bhil agitation

continued. A number of villages were set on fire and thus the agitation turned violent. Rajasthan Seva Sangh deputed Satya Bhakat and Ram Narain Chowdhry on a fact finding mission. If the Sewa Sangh's report is given credence, about 325 families and 1800 men and women were killed, 640 houses were either burnt or razed to the ground, 7085 mds. of grain were destroyed, 600 carts were burnt, 108 cattle were either killed or taken away and the other articles worth of Rs. 10,000/-were destroyed during this agitation. This Bhil tragedy awakened the people about their civil liberties and rights to live freely and peacefully.

However, inspite of the repressive policy of the States, the agitation could not be suppressed completely. On June 4, 1929 Tejawat was arrested. He was kept in the Mewar Central Jail for seven years without trial and was ultimately released in April, 1936. However, he was again arrested in 1942 during the Quit India Movement, and was again released on Feb. 3, 1947 from Jail and on this occasion a public reception was accorded to him.

Vanvasi Sewa Sangh.

Vanvasi Sewa Sangh also contributed significantly to awaken the Bhils socially and politically. The Sangh was successful to a great extent in attaining its object so much so that a number of Bhils pledged not to drink and to take opium in future. The result was that later on, the Bhils also demanded 'responsible govt'.

Thus the Bhil rising, in a way, helped in the emergence of national consciousness by opposing an alien government at different times and at different places.



SOCIAL AND POLITICAL AWAKENING AMONG THE BHILS OF MEWAR STATE DURING 1938-48 A.D.

By

HARI SHANKAR SHARMA

The period between 1938 and 1948, the former year marking the establishment of Mewar Rajya Prajamandal and the latter year coinciding with the merger of Mewar State into the integrated Union of nine States¹ and two Chiefships, had witnessed great political activity.

The activities of political organisations which were established in a few States of Rajputana before and during this decade (1938—48), received momentum only after the Resolution of the Haripura Session of the Indian National Congress in '38 which tried to bring all the people of the princely States into its ambit for freedom struggle. Almost for the whole decade under study, the workers of political organisations strove to awaken the masses politically so that they may feel their involvement in the common cause of driving out the foreign power.

Mewar State had a population of 19.26 lakhs² in 1941 of whom 4.5 lakhs or 23.3 per cent were tribals. Of these tribals, about 47.0 per cent were Bhils alone. Other tribes were Mīnās (39.8 per cent), Rāwats (9.4 per cent), Girāssias (3.3 per cent) and Merats (0.5 per cent).

Thus the largest group of tribals was that of Bhils forming about 11 per cent of the total population of the Mewar State. In whole of Rajputana, including Ajmer-Merwara, there were 7.6 lakhs of Bhils³ in 1941 of whom 2.2 lakhs or 29.0 per cent were in Udaipur followed by 1.7 lakhs in Banswara and 1.6 lakhs in Dungarpur State. The remaining population was scattered in other States.

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1. These nine States were Kota, Tonk, Bundi, Jhalawar, Pratapgarh, Dungarpur, Banswara, Kishangarh and Shahpura. The Chiefships were Lawa and Kushalgarh. *Report on the Administration of Rajasthan State, 1950-51*, Government of Rajasthan, Jaipur (1954), p. 2.
 2. Webb, A.W.T., *Census of India 1941, Rajputana*, pp. 2-3 & 179.
 3. Webb, A.W.T., *op.cit.*, p. 179.

Earlier Attempts

Before the political organisations like Prajamandal came into existence, there had been earlier attempts also by individual social reformers right from the last quarter of the 19th century down to the period immediately prior to the year of establishment of Prajamandal in 1938. They tried to introduce social reforms by advocating renunciation of social evils prevalent in the community such as superstitious beliefs, witchcraft,⁴ consumption of liquor etc. Christian Missions also made an attempt in this direction by opening schools for them or by bringing them in their religious fold.

But it is difficult to ascertain as to what extent their efforts were successful because the Bhils, by their very nature, were suspicious of all innovations. When the first Census operations were carried out in their area in 1881 they almost rose in revolt⁵. As a result only rough estimates⁶ of their population were entered in the Census Reports of 1881 and 1891. Their suspicion about the real motives of Census operations lingered on till 1931 and acquired by that time a form of superstitious belief. During 1931 Census operations, nearly all the Bhils refused⁷ to allow the enumerators to put numbers on their houses due to the superstition that whatever number was put, the population of that household will be reduced by that number. Their *Bhopās* still used to be the witchfinders and conducted ordeals and foretold future⁸.

Individual attempts were also made to woo them and at times successfully also, by espousing their cause relating to specific grievances like forced labour (*begar*) or extortion or exaction of illegal or heavy taxes or fixing higher revenue settlement rates and the like. These grievances were mostly economic in nature and caused them misery and, therefore, were at the back of agrarian uprisings.

Constraints

But political awakening was something different from agrarian uprisings which were the result of economic exploitation. The existing

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4. Sharma, H.S., Witchcraft in Mewar State, *Proceedings of the Rajasthan History Congress*. IIIrd Session, pp. 147-149.
 5. *Report on the Political Administration of Rajputan States 1880—81*, pp. 66—67.
 6. Erskine, K.D., *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Provincial Series, Rajputana, Calcutta (1908), p. 116.
 7. Guha, B.S., *Census of India 1931, Vol. I India Part III (Ethnographical)* Pt. B, Simla, (1935), p. I.
 8. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

political system or the contemplated one, was beyond the comprehension of the ordinary illiterate masses, especially the tribals, and was not going to affect them (the tribals) immediately or materially and that is why they were prone to show indifference towards this aspect. It would be worthwhile to mention in this context that in 1941, out of a total population of 19.26 lakhs of Mewar State, there were only 144 graduates, 46 post-graduates, 20 degree or diploma holders in Engineering and 63 degree or diploma holders in Medicine. The literacy⁹ among the tribals all combined (consisting of Minas, Bhils, Grassias, Rawat and Merats) was 0.9 per cent only. Out of a total population of 2.11 lakhs of Bhils, only 173 Bhils (154 males and 19 females) or 0.08 per cent were found to be literate.

Apart from the appalling illiteracy and fear complex from the outside world, there were other constraints also which hindered the percolation of new ideas, political or social, to the interior parts of the hilly tracts where the Bhils dwelt. Due to lack of means of transport and communication, the areas were inaccessible to the outsiders and the Bhils lived in a state of isolation and seclusion. The State had an area¹⁰ of 13,170 sq. miles having 16 townships and 5582 villages in 1941. Of these, the largest number¹¹ of villages i.e., 3546 were in *Jagir*, followed by 1533 in *Khalsa* and 503 in *Muafi* area. To serve these 5598 townships and villages, there were only 22 railway stations, 81 motor stands and 125 post offices. With such poor means of transport and communication coupled with a sparse density of 146 persons per sq. mile and poor literacy, it was but natural that ideas travelled even with much lesser speed than men. There were no traders or *Banias* of this area who, like the *Banias* of Shekhewati, had business houses in big cities and who would carry with them the germs of political enlightenment when he visited home on annual or casual trips. The only contact of these Bhils with the outside was either during the fairs like Baneshwar or Matra Kundia etc. or through those service personnel who had joined the Bhil Corps commanded by the British officers whose cantonments were located at Kherwara and Kotra.

Mewar Praja Mandal's Efforts

The Mewar Prajamandal had come into existence in 1938 and had sought responsible government under the aegis of the Maharana,

9. Dashora, Y.L., *Mewar in 1941 or A Summary of Census Statistics, Census of Mewar 1941*, Vol. IV, Alwar, p. 107.

10. Webb, A.W.T., *op.cit.*, pp. 2—3.

11. Dashora, Y.L., *op.cit.*, p. 224.

because the ruler was still considered to be the symbol of divine origin by the masses and at whose investiture the Bhils had special rights. It was only at a later stage of struggle that the Prajamandal wanted the ruler to get rid of British yoke by severing relations with the paramount power.

The concept of political and constitutional rights like freedom of association, speech, expression, universal franchise etc. were gradually finding their way from the British India to the princely States, the latter used all the power at their command to disallow such ideas to enter. Likewise, the concept of social equality, uplift of backward and down-trodden classes, appeal for abstinence from liquor and removal of other social evils among them made their way from British India only.

The Prajamandal workers were well aware of the constraints mentioned above which were likely to hinder their programmes. Therefore, they framed a strategy of disseminating their programmes through personal contacts with the tribals and win over their confidence and, gradually but steadily, to instil political ideas and social ideals. Shri Motilal Tejawat and Shri Manikyalal Verma had¹² tried this strategy successfully even before the Prajamandal came into existence espousing their economic grievances. Now through the agency of Prajamandal, there was a forceful platform to support the cause of the down-trodden tribals more potently and to propagate the ideas more vigorously.

The State authorities were well aware of these activities of Prajamandal workers. In December 1939, when Motilal Tejawat, after briefing at Udaipur to the editor of the *Sainik* newspaper of Agra about his proposed programme, wanted to proceed to Bhil districts, he was not allowed by the State authorities to proceed¹³. In 1940, famine conditions occurred in the State and parties of Prajamandals were sent to the inaccessible Bhil areas to provide relief work. These workers, during their visits also publicized the ill effects of liquor and also advised the tribals to stop sale of girls¹⁴. Next year, when Parasram Goel, a prominent Prajamandal worker, toured the Bhil areas during September-October 1941, the State authorities suspected that he was tutoring them

12. Saxena, K.S. *Polical Awakening in Rajasthan*, Delhi (1973). pp. 150-51, 214, 270.

13. File No. 71-80/Conf/Udaipur State/Basta No. 8/RSAB (Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner).

14. File No. 81-90/Conf/Udaipur State/Basta No. 9/RSAB.

those ideas which may result in their up-rising¹⁵ and therefore, stopped him from entering Kherwara, Magra and Bhomat districts which had predominantly Bhil population.

In order to execute its programmes of constructive work in an orderly way, it was thought proper by the Prajamandal workers to assign specific work to specific person for supervision. In February 1942, in the presence of Thakkar Bapa, the work of Harijan uplift was assigned to Shri Mohanlal Sukhadia while Shri Balwant Singh Mehta¹⁶ was made incharge to supervise the Bhil uplift work. Motilal Tejawat gathered 130 Bhils and 10 Bhilnis from Koliyari, Jhadol and Bagpura and took them to Ghashiramji Maharaj, a Jain preacher, who preached them the usual advice to give up drinking, eating flesh, and theft.¹⁷

In April 1942, a meeting of the Executive Committee of the local Prajamandal workers of Udaipur was held in which, amongst other things, they decided¹⁸ to pay adequate attention to Bhil areas. Those Prajamandal workers, who were also college students, were required to teach the cultivators.

In 1942-43, unprecedented floods occurred in Mewar State which provided both the Prajamandal workers and the State authorities an opportunity to come together to provide relief to the affected population. The Khari, the Kothari, the Masi and to some extent, the Berach rivers rose several feet above their embankments. The Banas which received waters of the Kothari and the Berach rivers carried away crops and houses of several villages in Jahazpur and other districts of the State. According to an estimate, 125 villages were devastated¹⁹ taking a heavy toll of life, nearly of 5000 human beings, and a million cattle. Besides other areas, the tribal areas were also badly affected. The Prajamandal workers who were released from jail recently, immediately hastened to the affected areas and rendered substantial help to the afflicted people. The State also came out with timely help and spent²⁰ nearly 6 lakhs of rupees by way of providing food, clothing

15. File No. 42-A/Conf/Udaipur State/1941-42/RSAB.

16. *Mewar Praja Mandal* (1938-45), edited by Mohanlal Sukhadia, Nawajivan Printing Press Udaipur.

17. File No. 42-A/Conf/Udaipur State/1941-42/RSAB.

18. File No. 41-A/Conf/Udaipur State/RSAB.

19. *Mewar—An Introspection*, edited by Ramesh Chandra Vyas, Udaipur pp. 26-32.

20. Dashora, Y. L., *Census 1951, District Census Handbook, Part I, Udaipur District, Bikaner, 1954*, p. xx.

and shelter. Public contribution also came in and a joint relief committee of the State and public was established with Bhawani Shankar Vaidya, a member of the Working Committee of the Praja Mandal, as its Secretary and Bhurelal Baya, the Vice-President of Prajamandal, as the organiser of relief²¹ works.

Motilal Tejawat kept on touring the tribal areas, advocating them to abstain from drinking, to give up beef eating habits and community thefts. Despite the stern orders of the State asking him not to visit Bhomat and Magra divisions where Bhils were in prepondering majority, Tejawat continued preaching and advising them to establish Panchayats to decide disputes. He was shadowed by the State authorities wherever he went and was ultimately arrested at Kotra on 24th January 1946 by Maxwell.²²

Contact with Leaders :

In order to create a feeling among the tribals of their involvement in the prevailing political activities, the workers decided to bring them into contact with the outside leaders and vice versa, so that the tribals get a feeling of participation and the outside leaders also get a first hand information about their living conditions. Sarangdhardas, a leftist leader, visited Udaipur in 1940 and stayed with Shri Daya Shankar Shrotiya, a prominent Prjamandal leader. Later, he visited with Shri Shrotiya, Shri Bhurelal Baya and Shri Parasram Goel, the areas of Kankroli and Jawarmata and gathered information about the tribals, their cattle, fodder, living conditions, indebtedness, illiteracy and forced labour.²³

Smt. Vijai Laxmi Pandit, who had come to Udaipur in 1941 to participate in the deliberations of the First Annual Session of the Prajamandal, was received at the railway station by the Bhils under the leadership of Parasram Goel. They presented her a Guard of Honour.

Settling Disputes :

Another way of gaining the confidence of these tribals and seeking opportunity for implanting new ideas on them, was through attending to their personal problems. The workers invited²⁴ applications from them

22. File No. 6-A/Conf/Udaipur State/1946/RSAB.

23. File No 44-A/Conf/Udaipur State/1939-40/RSAB.

24. File No. Udaipur/Conf/Udaipur State/1941-42/Basta No. 5/ Rajasthan State Archives Bikaner.

25. *Proceedings of the Rajasthan History Congress*, Sirohi Session (1982), Vol. XIII Jodhpur (1984), p. 174.

about their grievances against the government servants or the *Thikana* authorities and tried to settle these through the intervention of the higher government authorities. When frequent or serious complaints were received, these were often referred to the committees for investigation and report. When the Thanedar of Salumbar committed atrocities on the tribals, a meeting of the Executive Committee of Prajamandal was held on 27th December 1944 and Shri Bhurelal Baya, a prominent worker, was asked to meet Raoji and investigate the progress of action taken by Raoji against the Thanedar. When complaint was received about the atrocities committed on tribals by Jhadol Thikana, Bhurelal Baya and Ramesh Chandra Vyas were required to go to Jhadol to acquaint themselves with the situation and to verify the version of the Commission of Enquiry.²⁵

Educating the Tribals :

Perhaps the most effective way to disseminate the political ideas in the isolated areas of tribals was by opening schools and keeping the most trusted workers as teachers there who would come in daily contact with them and would gradually preach political ideologies. The Prajamandal started 12 schools for the Bhils in Magra, Chittor, and Bhilwara divisions²⁶ as would be evident from a Report of 1945. The Bhil Sewa work which was suspended for sometime was reorganised under the guidance of Thakkar Bappa. Hostels for women were opened at Bhilwara, for Kisans at Bijolia and for Bhils²⁷ at Udaipur to prepare them for national work in future. The Bhil Vidyapeeth, whose patron was Balwant Singh Mehta, was set up to create awakening²⁸ among the Bhils.

In order to maintain contacts with the Bhils and other cultivators, the Prajamandal workers started a shop, named Mewar Industries²⁹ at Udaipur, with a branch at Rikhabdeo, and took opportunity to get information from the visiting cultivators about the problems in their areas and disseminated city news through them to the rural areas.

Looking to the fast changing situation, the Mewar government also took up welfare schemes in hand to ameliorate the conditions of the tribals. Harijan Uplift Committee was set-up, not only to help and

25. File No. 21/Conf/Udaipur State/Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner.

26. File No. 9/Conf/Udaipur State/Basta No. 1/Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner.

27. *Mewar Praja Mandal* (1938-45), edited by Mohanlal Sukhadia.

28. File No. 16-A/Udaipur State/1946/Rajasthan Archives Bikaner.

29. File No. 9/Conf/Udaipur State/Basta No. 1/RSAB.

look into the conditions of Harijans but also of Bhils, Minas and other tribals. In June 1947, its three members were changed and instead Janardanrai Nagar, Amritlal Yadav and Jaswant Singh Nahar were appointed.³⁰ The Uplift Committee had a scheme to award scholarships to the needy children of Harijans and tribals, including Bhils³¹ and Minas.

After the attainment of Independence and the subsequent integration of princely States, the newly formed government immediately took up programmes for social uplift of the tribals. The Backward Classes Welfare Department, which came into existence in 1948, consisted of 3 sections, one dealing with the aboriginal and Hill tribes i.e. Adivasis, another with Scheduled Castes, and the third with other backward classes including criminal tribes.

A Bhil Uplift Committee was started in 1948 in consultation with Shri Thakkar Bapa.

There were in 1949, 11 institutions working for the uplift of Adivasis and other backward classes at Udaipur, Dungarpur, Shahpura, Pratapgarh, Jahazpur, Bhilwara, Kushalgarh Bigod and Kota. Government gave them grant-in-aid amounting to 75% of their monthly expenditure. These institutions maintained 102 schools and 8 hostels for the education of their children.³²

Conclusion

The effects of these efforts on the tribals may be briefly concluded as below :

Social Reforms--In fact, it is difficult to assess the effects of the efforts made by the political workers and the State authorities to bring about the change in the social outlook of the Bhils. The reasons are two-fold viz. (1) a decade is too small a period either to make a dent in the age old social evils or to concurrently assess the effects of the measures adopted, especially when these workers as well as the State authorities themselves were preoccupied in other vital issues of their political future and (2) the political awareness towards changing political system cannot be measured unless the system has remained in operation for some period. Moreover, political awareness is an abstract thing and it is difficult to fix parameters to measure it unless it is reflected

30. *Mewar Gazette*, Vol. 68, No. 40, Part I dated 23rd June 1947.

31. *Mewar Gazette*, dated 28th July 1947.

32. *Report on the Administration of Rajasthan State 1950-51*, p. 86.

in some concrete actions or issues like the voting behaviour in election or referendum. The General Elections of 1952 do not give separate voting pattern community-wise and only generalisation can be made about the political awareness on the basis of entire voting population, of course, including Bhils.

Nevertheless, some surveys conducted during 1961 Census reveal that no major changes took place relating to the drinking habits of the tribals. The survey³² of Kailashpuri village in Girwa tahsil, which had a total of 180 households of which 96 households belonged to Bhils, it was found that Bhils along with the Rajputs were excessively fond of liquor. In another survey of Panarwa village in Phalasia tahsil of Udaipur, having 13 Bhil households out of a total of 31 households, it was discovered that all the Bhils and Grassias including women and children, were addicted to liquor³³.

The Tekchand Committee on Prohibition visited Rajasthan in October 1963 and found that 90 percent of the male adults of scheduled tribe population of Rajasthan took liquor. The Report says that formerly the percentage was more. The reduction of 10 percent in drinking was found due to the concerted efforts made in this direction. The Report further says that among Bhils, drinking was found common even among women and children but those who had come under the influence of Bhāgat movement abstained from drinking. Among the Bhils, the poverty was grinding, health was extremely poor and living standards almost primitive. In order to bring about any improvement in this community, the Report said, additional employment, education, raising of standard of health would serve as first step. Interference with their drinking habits *at this stage*, especially through coercion, would be a hardship. In order of priority, the report further said, the first problem was economic, the second of health and third of reforms.

It is thus worthy of note that even after a lapse of one and a half decade after independence, the necessity of social reforms occupied third place in the list of priorities meant for the improvement of tribals.

Political Awakening—In the absence of separate statistics of voting behaviour community-wise during the first General Elections in 1952 after the Independence, it is difficult to assess the impact of efforts made to bring about political awareness during the decade 1938-48. In

33. *Census of India 1961—Kailashpuri—A Village Survey* pp. 3 : 10.

34. *Census of India—Panarwa—A Village Survey*, pp. 3, 11.

the Vidhan Sabha elections of 1952, there were 30 constituencies in the area covered by the present Udaipur, Chittor, Bhilwara, Banswara and Dungarpur districts. The lowest polling (21.79 percent) was observed in Lasadia and Saira (21.9 percent) constituencies and the highest polling (56.33) was in Sagwara constituency (Dungarpur district), reflecting the reactions of the voters towards the changed political system.

In short, it may be said that during this decade (1938-48) the tribals may not have been awakened politically but the political organisations and the princely States had become conscious of the political necessity to awaken the tribals politically and socially so as to capture power in the changing political system which was in the offing.

THE GROWTH OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL AWAKENING AMONG THE BHILS OF MEWAR

V. S. BHATNAGAR

Bhil risings in Mewar had become a recurring feature in the second half of the 19th century. These risings ranged from being more or less isolated cases of defiance by a few Bhil *pāls* (villages), for instance in 1850 and 1855¹, to hostilities involving thousands of Bhils for securing definite demands. The risings of the first category were quelled with comparative ease, though with considerable severity, and were merely regarded as arising out of the rebellious conduct of the Bhils of a particular *pāl* or due to the natural propensity of the semi-civilized Bhils to break the law and indulge in some criminal activity or the other. However some of the risings were of a serious nature, such as those of 1876 and 1881, which were the outcome of the growing awareness among the Bhils of their rights and privileges and feeling of resentment against economic exploitation and oppression by the State officials.

It may be mentioned that the Bhil chiefs were enjoying full freedom in the exercise of their authority [over their clans, and the Mewar government did not interfere in their internal matters and social customs and felt contented on receiving a nominal amount of revenue from them.² However, with the increase in control and interference of the British in the internal affairs of Mewar and the growth of awareness among the Bhils, the nature of the Bhil risings also underwent a change. The risings of 1876 and 1881 highlighted the sensitiveness of the Bhil feelings in respect of their traditional freedom, the economic and social factors which lay at the root of these risings, as well as the importance of the role of the British in the internal affairs of the Mewar State.

In 1876, State troops were sent to quell the rising of the Bhils of Mandava and Bakol *pals*, and for the first time guns were used to deal with a Bhil rising. It is true that some cases of witch-swinging had taken place and the Bhils were not inclined to submit to the regulations prohibiting the evil,³ but, on enquiry, which was initiated on the orders

1. Kaviraja Shyamal Das, *Vir Vinod*, p.p. 1943, 1956.

2. *Ibid*, p.p. 2076-77.

3. *Mewar Agency Report*, (1875-76).

of the Political Agent, it was found the Bhils had valid grounds for feeling aggrieved. Thus it came to light that administration under Hākim Raghunath Rao was very corrupt and oppressive so much so that the Bhils had to sell off even their children in order to pay money to the state officials.⁴ Similarly, it was found that the *Vilayatī* Pathans, who were employed by the State as soldiers, used to lend money to the Bhils, charging interest at a very high rate. They used to fabricate the accounts, took the Bhil children as slaves for non-payment of their inflated loan amounts, and behaved in a most arrogant and pitiless manner with the wives and children of the Bhils. The outraged Bhils at last killed a few of these Pathans. Since they were State servants, the crime was taken seriously by the corrupt state officials of the area, and they destroyed some of the Bhil *pāls*.⁵

As a result of the enquiry it became clear that the Bhils were the wronged party. The Hākim and some other officials were punished and replaced by other State officials. A new department called *Shail-Kāntar Sambandhanī Sabhā* was created to look into the problems of the hilly area and the Maharana decided to keep the district under his direct supervision. An enquiry was also held in the doings of the Pathans and they were found guilty and punished or deported.⁶ Thus the grievances of the Bhils were found to be sufficiently supported by the actual facts. The holding of the enquiry into their problems and its findings marked a significant development in the relations of the Bhils vis-a-vis the Mewar government.

A few years later serious unrest among the Bhils of Barahpāl, Tidi, Padunā, Parsād, Alsīgarh, Rai etc., became manifest and the disturbances which flared up this time were widespread and serious enough to invite British intervention and calling of reinforcements from Bombay, Dungarpur and feudal levies. One of the important causes of the uprising was the apprehension in the minds of the Bhils on account of the census operations of 1881 which no doubt was a serious intrusion into the secluded life in the *pāls*. There was also a fear that able bodied Bhils would be inducted for the Afghan war. The role of some of the enumerators only added to their fears about impending intervention in their personal matters.

Besides the Census operations, there were other causes of grievances of the Bhils. The State had tried to suppress the social evils prevailing

4. *Vir Vinod*, p. 2191.

5. *Ibid*, p. 2193.

6. *Ibid*.,

among them, such as witch-swinging, with a firm hand, Prohibition on the manufacture of liquor, which the Bhils regarded as their right, was also strictly enforced, Salt prices had risen and the right to manufacture salt had been taken away. Restrictions on cutting of forest growth had also been imposed.⁷ But more important of their demands, as they told Col. Blair, First Assistant Political Agent, Mewar, who entered into direct negotiations with the Bhils, much against the wishes of the Mewar officials, were (a) rectoration of freedom as of old (b) abolition of *barād*, imposed by the local official (c) suspension of Census operations and new settlement operations which involved measurement of land.⁸ The latter operation were bound to end the seclusion of their habitations and expose their social customs and practices to the outsiders, ever ready to exploit the simple tribals. Besides, the fear of manipulation of figures by the revenue officers was there. It was Col. Blair's suggestion that the terms, when concluded, be inscribed on a stone and put up near Rishaba Deo's temple⁹ venerated by the Bhils.

When the negotiations commenced, after considerable loss of life on both sides, the Mewar officials took a hard line. They were strongly of the view that the Bhils should not go unpunished for causing loss of life, and at least fine and written undertaking for obedient behaviour must be taken from them. The state officials were also reluctant to suspend the collection of *barād*. The British officers, Col. Walter, Lt. Col. Blair, virtually forced the state officials to come to terms with the Bhils threatening to enter into direct negotiations with the Bhils in case the Mewar officials Kaviraja Shyamaldas and Amān Singh continued to postpone conclusion of terms.¹⁰ Ultimately the State Government agreed to remit half of the *barād* and stop house to house census. The Bhils on their side promised to pay fine to compensate for the killing of the State officials and other persons and also made solemn promise for good behaviour in future.¹¹ Out of the 24 objections raised by the Bhil chiefs. 9 were conceded by the Mewar officials and were sent for formal approval.

7. *Ibid*, p. 2217; F. D. Pol., April 1881 No. 25-39; *Mewar Agency Report* (1880-81); D.L. Paliwal, *Mewar and the British* (1857-1921), p.p. 157-158.

8. *Vir Vinod*, p. 2226.

9. *Ibid*.

10. *Khas Ruqqa* addressed to Kaviraja Shyamal Das and Mehta Panna Lal's letter dt. 12th Aril 1881 in *Vir Vinod*. See p.p. 2222-28.

11. F.D. Pol. April 1881, No. 137-39.

This rising, which involved participation of 8-10 thousand Bhils, was a land mark in their struggle for their rights and paved the way for social and political awakening among them in the next few decades. In 1882-83, the *gametis* (headmen of the *pāls*) and *banjgaris* (headmen of hamlets) promised to the A.G.G. that they would not allow any woman to be killed on the suspicion of her being a witch and in case they had suspicion, they would inform the Government about it.¹² This was a further indication of the growing enlightenment among the Bhils.

12. *Mewar Agency Report*, 1882-83, para 49.

TRIBALS OF SOUTHERN RAJASTHAN : FROM ISOLATION TO MAINSTREAM

(The Development Syndrome)

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Tribals are described as isolates. They were the first settlers in this country. It is the irony of fate that those who were the real sons of soil, have remained for long buried in illiteracy, backwardness and exploitation. In the past they existed as a wounded society, especially in the medieval period of history. The feudal lords committed all kinds of atrocities and highhandedness over them. They were reduced to the status of beasts of burden. The isolation not only physical, but social, economic, and political was broken soon after the attainment of independence. However, the *Jagirdars* and the petty traders had made contacts with the tribals, the former invariably acted as *dekus*, the exploiters for the latter. The constitutional safeguards given to the tribals in the form of reservation and opportunities for development are surely a compensation for the historical backwardness and exploitation of these disadvantaged groups.

The tunnel for the tribals seems to have been a large one. The breaking up of their isolation through massive structural transformation has to-day put them to other kinds of problems. In the past, in the absence of any welfare schemes, they were more or less a homogeneous group. Inequalities among them were much sharp and conspicuous. Reporting about the stratification patterns found among the tribals, Suresh Kumar Singh observes that the colonial system created and strengthened a threefold division with the feudatory chief *jagirdars* at the top, the well-to-do headmen in the middle and the general mass at the bottom (S.K. Singh, 1985: 260). The situation in terms of the cohesive structure of the Bhils of southern Rajasthan in the earlier years of the present century tallies with the general trend of stratification given by S.K. Singh. For instance, Major Erskine, (1908: 227-8) the British official, observes that the Bhil tribe is divided into larger number of clans. Each clan, and indeed each village or *pal* had its leader or headman called *gameti*.

The whole tribe was divided into three classes which may be denominated the village, the cultivating, and the wild or mountain Bhil. The first consisted of those who from ancient residence of clans had become inhabitants of villages in the plains (though) usually near the hills, of which they were the watchmen and were incorporated as a portion of the community. The cultivating Bhils were those who remained in their peaceful occupations after their leaders were destroyed or driven away by invaders to become desperate freedom breakers. Erskine says that the specimens of these two classes were found in almost every state of the erstwhile Rajputana. The third class, that of the wild or mountain Bhil, comprised all that part of the tribe which, preferring savage freedom and indolence to submission and industry had continued more or less "to subsist by plunder."

The crude stratification found among the Bhils of Southern Rajasthan during the times of the feudal regime was actually a pattern of habitation influenced by the tribal migration in terms of their closeness or remoteness to the core of surrounding civilisation. For instance, to quote Erskine again, each tribal group alternatively decreased or increased in number according to the fluctuations in the neighbouring governments. When these have been strong and prosperous, the village and cultivating Bhils had drawn recruits from their "Wilder" brethren, while weakness, confusion and oppression had the usual effect of driving the industrious of the tribe to desperate courses.

After the attainment of independence, the tribals got some constitutional special privileges which brought them nearer to the national mainstream. Admittedly, the government spent large sums of money for the development of tribals but the implementation of the development schemes, we have enough empirical evidence to support, has gone much in favour of the non-tribals, the latter having cornered a lion's share of the benefit due to the tribals. Whatever schemes that benefitted the tribals created new problems also. The objective of the present paper is to discuss the package of welfare programmes given to the tribals during the feudal regime, that is, the princely rule and soon after that during the period of Five Year Plans in free India. Finally, I have discussed the extent to which the tribals have come nearer to the national mainstream.

Tribal Situation in the erstwhile Southern Rajasthan

Our present day tribal sub-plan area of southern Rajasthan which comprises of the districts of Dungarpur, Banswara, and parts of Chittorgarh and Udaipur was a part of Mewar Residency, also including the district of Bhilwara, during feudal regime. The Mewar Residency, in

fact, culturally included, two regions of Mewar and Vagar or Vagad. Both the regions have different dialects and different cultural configurations. Dungarpur and Banswara today have a tribal population which numerically goes beyond 61 per cent to the total general population. These are, therefore, districts of tribal culture, though in cities and towns, the non-tribals display some degree of modernisation. The ex-rulers of the erstwhile states of Dungarpur and Banswara were the extended kin of the rulers of Mewar.

The feudal rulers of the erstwhile states of Dungarpur and Banswara were called Maharavals. The ruler of Mewar, on the other hand, was addressed as Maharana. The villages in both these regions were classified as *Khalsa Jagir*, and *Muafi*. The classification were purely are venue classification. The *Khalsa* villages were under the Central rule. The revenue of land and the taxes of these villages were a concern of the central administration. The *jagir* villages, on the other hand were under the direct administration of the *jagirdar*, the latter being subservient to the central government. The subjects of the *jagir* villages were not, in any way under the central administration. The taxes of the *muafi* villages—the gifted ones were realised by the *muafidar*. The tribals largely were the parts of the *jagir* and *muafi* villages. The *Khalsa* villages, by and large, were caste Hindu villages.

Even during the feudal regime, the region of southern Rajasthan was dominated by the tribal groups of Bhils and Damors. Describing the major characteristics of the Bhils, Erskine (1908 : 226) observes that the tribe as a whole has always been lawless and independent, fond of fighting, “shy, excitable and restless. Believing themselves doomed to be thieves and plunderers, they were confirmed in their destiny by the oppression and cruelty of their rulers. The common answer of a Bhil, when charged with robbery was, “I am not to blame, I am Mahadeo’s thief.” Some of the characteristics of the tribe, thus have been lawlessness, independence, shyness, etc. To those may be added truthfulness, hospitality, obedience to legitimate authority, and confidence in and respect for the *Sarkar* (the British government).

The Bhils of the region had relations with the Rajput rulers, both of co-operation and antagonism. The present attitude of the tribe with the government which is characterised by suspicion and protest is rooted in the history. Their historical ‘hate’ with the Rajput rulers is found in their present attitude towards the government. It must be observed here that in the region of southern Rajasthan, before the ascendancy of Rajput dynasties, the Bhils were the rulers of the erstwhile

states of Banswara and Dungarpur. Bansia and Dungaria Bhils have founded these states. In their encounter with the Rajputs, the Bhils lost the battle and thus entered into peaceful settlements with the former. Being a marshal tribe, the Bhils, helped Bapa Rawal, Rana Pratap and others, whenever they faced any difficulty.

During the later periods of Rajput history, the rulers were not "kind" to the Bhils, the latter being ill-treated, oppressed and compelled to submit to *begar* and payment of a number of state taxes. In fact, there is enough evidence to state that during the later period of sovereignty, the Rajputs treated the Bhils as beasts. They tyrannised them "exercising a rough justice in which their victims might be whipped, or beaten with shoes. Their eyes could be gouged out, they could be hanged on the trees up-side-down and their legs cut off (Carstairs: 172)." Their oppression led them to adopt a lawless and criminal life. In the later periods "they took to dacoity and highway robbery (Doshi: 16).

During the upheaval of 1857, the Bhil troops stood by the British government and checked the outburst created by Tantya Tope in Banswara in December 1858. The then ruler of the state, Laxman Singh, had to take refuge in the forest when Tantya Tope came with his followers. The army of Bhil troops controlled the situation and the leader had to march towards Mewar (Ojha: 170-71).

During the period of British domination, efforts were made to domesticate the Bhils and to seek their recruitment in the Bhils Corps raised between 1840 and 1844 at Kherwara in the erstwhile state of Mewar. The Bhil Corps was established with the object of "weaning a semi-savage race from its predatory habits, giving it honourable employment, and assisting the Darbar in preserving order (Erskine: 230)." The raising of Bhil Corps had its influence on the entire Bhil population of the region of southern Rajasthan. They were given "civilization". Due to this impact forays into Gujarat and the neighbouring states became less frequent than they used to be. The British assessment of the impact of the functioning of Bhil Corps, especially during scarcity period, runs as under : (Erskine: 231) :

"During the famines of 1899-1900 and 1901-1902 the Corps did excellent work in the hill tracts by hunting down dacoits, patrolling the country, and keeping order generally."

The numerical situation of the Bhils in the erstwhile states of Rajasthan shows that there has been an unusual growth of the tribals in comparison to the general population growth. However, the fact

remains that since the enumeration of population, the tribal groups have maintained a numerical preponderance in the regions. The non-tribals have always been in some of the former states, in minority. And it also remains a fact that despite having a "majority" in the population structure, to this day the tribals have always received a second rate treatment. They have suffered historically at the hands of the non-tribals. The present better-off condition of the non-tribal groups has to be explained in this historical context of population structure. Details of population situation for some conspicuous years are given in table—I.

(See Pages on 34 & 35 Table 1 & 2)

Tribal Welfare in the Feudal Regime

The feudal states of the former Rajasthan had a special kind of relations with the Bhils. For them they were trouble-makers. They had to be strongly kept under control. Their approach towards them was, therefore, not of any benevolence or paternalism. Even during the census operations of 1881 and 1891 the enumeration of the tribals was taken very lightly. They were considered as non-entities—the isolates, who were required only to pay the taxes and never expected any gesture of welfare from the government. Whatever little that was done for the Bhils by the feudal regime was only to "civilize" them to the extent that it took steam out of their antagonistic boiler.

In the Census of 1941 we get a general information about the social profile of the former states of southern Rajasthan. It is general in the sense that no separate data are available for the tribals. The general information, however, in terms of welfare measures is highly damaging. The feudal lords never did anything worthwhile to improve the status of the common masses. The data are given in the Table-2.

Primary education was given only in the former States of Mewar and Dungarpur in the whole region of southern Rajasthan. It was managed either by the Mewar Bhil Corps or the Christian Missions. Education remained restricted to upper-primary level only. It was only for Bhil boys. The details are given in Table—3.

Table—1
Population Structure of the former States of Rajasthan

Former State	Years					
	1981		1901		1941	
	Tribal	General total pratapgarh	Tribal	General total population	Tribal	General total population
Udaipur	51076 (3.41)	1494220	134114 (13.16)	1018805	211190 (10.95)	809156 (34.33)
Dungarpur	66952 (43.55)@	153381	33887 (33.85)	100103	156587 (57.14)	440026 (64.44)
Banswara	NA	152045	101528 (63.61)	165350	170640 (65.88)	643966 (72.63)
Pratapgarh	75320 (94.66)*	79568	11513 (22.12)	52025	NA	112075 (49 11)
						228210
						2356959
						682845
						886600
						228210

NA—Not available.

@—The figures for 1881 are of no value; there was attempt made to distinguish tribal from Hindus.

*—The figures for 1881 are of little value as Hindus Animists and Jains were also grouped together.

Table—2

Social Profile of the masses of People in the Erstwhile States according to 1941 Census

Erstwhile State	Population in 1941	Percent age of Literacy	Number of un-employed	Miles of Roads Metalled	Un-metalled	Miles of state railways	Hospitals & Dispensaries	College	Schools of all kind
Banswara	259000	2.0	33 (19)	39	148	—	5	—	43
Dungarpur	274000	3.0	139 (66)	16	288	—	5	—	19
Mewar	192700	4.9	243 (142)	621	184	147	27	1	236
Pratapgarh	92000	6.9	18 (18)	16	125	—	14	—	37
Kushalgarh (Chiefship)	104000	6.5	55 (40)	33	6	—	8	—	31

Note : The figures shown in brackets in column 12 are literate unemployed.

Source : Webb, A.W.T., *These Ten Year, British India Press Bombay,*
Rajputana Census Vol. XXIV—Part I p. 24, 1941.

Table-3
Bhil Schools in 1905-1906

State	Locallty	Management	Average atten- dance	Cless	Remarks
Udaipur	Kherwara	Mewar Bhil Corps	83	Upper Primary	—
Udaipur	Kotra	Mewar Bhil Corps.	13	Lower Primary	—
Udaipur	Udaipur City	U.F.C. Mission	13	Primary	Bhil Boys
Dungarpur	Genji		21	Primary Hindi	Mainly for Bhil

Source : K.D. Erskine, *Rajputana Gazetteers—The Mewar Residency*, Vol-II-13, Statistical Tables, Scottish Mission Industries Co. Ltd. p.23, 24, 39, 1908.

Perhaps the best settlement of the Bhils which the feudal regime could have done was to provide them assured means of livelihood. They could have been given cultivable land in the plains. Irrigation facilities could also have been given. If anything of this kind was done to the Bhils in the former states, the Rajput rulers could have paid their due to the Bhils who did great and heroic work for their ascendancy. But nothing of this kind was done for them. On the other hand, all efforts were made to keep them away from the mainstream of civilisation that was found in the plains. Never did the feudal rulers open up the hilly and forest region of the tribals. With such an uncongenial historical background of oppression, exploitation and dependence, the Bhils like other several tribal groups of the country got special privileges—in the form of safeties and securities from the constitution. It was a dawn of a new hope and prosperity for them—an unhistorical situation.

New Era of Tribal Development

With the promugation of our constitution, we are—the people of India, striving hard to build a secular India. The tribals like other multi-pluralities of the nation are brought to the national mainstream. The mainstream presupposes the existence of a national culture. The outline of Indian national culture is provided by the Indian constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy. The diverse Indian communities—the majority, the linguistic and religious minorities, and the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes—shall

endeavour to accomplish integrated nationhood through a process of education and modernisations. The Constitution attaches great value to Indian nationhood as a secular democracy. It further earmarks the position of the individuals of all communities in the projected picture of the national polity. The Constitution also determines the ways and means for achieving the national culture, and recommends institutional machinery to achieve it.

The problems of tribals as have developed in these peculiar historical circumstances assume importance. The Constitution deals with these problems in a particularistic way. It entrusts the states with the responsibilities of tribal administration. In order to exempt tribal societies from several complex formalities of our legal system, provisions have been incorporated in the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution. Under this schedule the Governor of a State has authority to modify certain given Central and State laws in the interest of tribals. Thus the constitution facilitates a smooth implementation of tribal policies by making the States responsible for the task of tribal development. Thus the States can mould their policies to suit the specific requirements of the various scheduled tribes residing in their areas.

Since the inception of national planning, specific efforts have been made for the development of tribal areas. In 1954, Multi-purpose Tribal Development Blocks were set up. Prior to this in 1952, the Community Development Programme was commenced under which the all round development of rural society had been envisaged. The programme also included tribal area development schemes. It was observed that the economic standard of the tribals was generally low and this required special attention. For this a complementary arrangement was made in the tribal development blocks.

During the initial formulation of the Fifth Plan, the problem of tribal development was thoroughly examined. However, the tribal regions which were benefiting from certain special programmes were deprived of the general programmes. Primarily there were two reasons for this situation. Since the tribal regions had a peculiar status of their own, the programmes formulated by various government departments for 'general' areas did not benefit such regions considerably. Secondly, it was difficult to approach the tribal areas by fast means of transport and communication. All this cumulatively had turned the tribal areas into largely underdeveloped regions.

In the context of the above situation, the Fifth Plan emphasised the need for co-ordination among various departments to effectively carry

out the tribal development programmes. When the practical aspects of this policy were discussed, it became clear that the tribal areas should be divided into three distinct categories : first, those areas where the tribals were in a majority; second, those areas where the tribals were scattered; and third, those areas where the scheduled tribes were still leading a primitive life. For the tribals in the first category, the tribal sub-plan area was demarcated in the Fifth Five Year Plan.

Before we discuss the efforts made by the Tribal Area Development Agency for the tribal groups of the sub-plan area, let us portray the nature of tribal problems and the extent of backwardness found among them.

Socio-economic Characteristics of the Tribals of Rajasthan

The following are some important characteristics of the tribal area of Rajasthan.

Tribals' high rate of population growth is the main problem of their development. The table given below shows the population of tribals between 1951 to 1982.

Table—4
Population of the Tribals in the Sub-Plan Area

Year	Population of the state (Lakh)	Tribal population	Decadal growth rate	
			General	Tribal
1951	160	—	—	—
1961	202	—	+26.20	25
1971	258	31.26	+27.63	28
1981	343	41.83	+32.95	+30.62

According to 1971 census, the total rural population of the tribal sub-plan area was 20.63 lakhs of which 6.13 lakh or 29.72 per cent were workers while 70.28 per cent population was non-workers. Among scheduled tribes' population of 13.76 lakhs, 29.09 per cent or 4.00 lakh were workers while 70.91 per cent population was non workers. The proportion between workers and non-workers population is 30 : 70 indicating the fact that there is a pre-dominance of economically non-active population in the total population of the area. As regards the scheduled tribes population of workers, 96.57 per cent are engaged as cultivators and agricultural labourers. The proportion of workers classified under other occupations is so small that it hardly has any impact on non agricultural sectors.

Tribals have small land holdings. The following data pertaining to the districts of Dungarpur, Banswara and Udaipur give agricultural size of holdings :

Table—5
Size of Land Holding

District	(in hect.)		
	Average size of holdings		
	1970-71	1975-76	1980-81
Banswara	2.5	2.2	1. 8
Dungarpur	2.1	1.6	1. 7
Udaipur	2.2	2.1	1.84

Low rate of literacy in the tribal area is the main problem of the development. When we discuss the percentage of literacy for the tribal population, it is distressing. In 1961, the literacy level among the tribals was 5.70 per cent only. There was a marginal increase in literacy percentage to 6.47 per cent in 1971 and to 10.27 per cent in 1981.

The Commissioner for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes has recommended that planned and concerted efforts may be made to raise the literacy rate of females among them to at least 10 per cent (from 4.85% ST and 6.44% SC) and among the SC/ST males to 30% (from 17.63% ST and 22.30% SC) in the remaining period of the Sixth Plan itself (Report of the Commissioner : 117).

Due to hill slopes, irrigated agriculture has not been possible except in lands on foot hills. In 1981, in the tribal district of Dungarpur only 9.04 per cent of the cultivated land received irrigation while in Banswara this percentage was 8.70 against 21.61 per cent for the State as a whole. Special efforts are required for development of irrigation.

Tribals still follow traditional farm technology. The speed of transfer of technology continues to be very slow. Consequently there is low productivity as the spread of improved agricultural practices is limited.

The forests in the hilly region determine to a great extent the life of the tribal people. Due to over exploitation of forests, tribals are fast getting marginalised.

Community infra-structure is the pre-requisite of any development. The tribals have remained isolated from the centres of development

for long. Even to-day they lack most of the needs of development. Inadequate infra-structure in areas like roads, power, electrification, industries, communication, medical facilities, marketing, banking activities etc. are the major problems of the tribals.

Quality of cattle breed is very poor in the tribal areas. Absence of good pasture lands, hilly terrain, small holdings, and inadequate animal health coverage further compound this cycle of inferior breeds. Due to the inferior breeds, dairy development programmes have suffered.

Tribal areas are difficult areas to live in. The administrators do not like to live in such difficult areas. This leads to a large number of posts in both technical and non-technical departments remaining vacant. An evaluation study of the tribal sub-plan also indicates thin administration in the implementation of various schemes (An Evaluation Study : 73-84).

The Objectives of Tribal Development

The strategy adopted for tribal development in the state aims at essentially the following objectives :

1. A progressive reduction in the incidence of poverty and the unemployed;
2. improving the quality of life through a minimum needs programme;
3. a reduction in the inequalities of income and wealth;
4. infra-structure in the development for fuller exploitation of potential of the region (Tribal Development in Rajasthan . 7)

The Structure of Tribal Sub-plan

According to 1981 Census, the state is inhabited by 41.83 lakh tribals who constitute 12.20 per cent of the state total population. These tribals are largely concentrated in Banswara (8.87 lakhs) and Dungarpur (6.83 lakh) districts, southern half of Udaipur (highest population 8.95 lakhs), Chittorgarh (2.28 lakhs) and Sirohi (1.09 lakhs). These tribal concentrated areas have been grouped under the name of tribal sub-plan area. The percentage of the tribal-sub-plan area to the total areas of the state is only 6 and the average density of population in the area is 106 persons per square kilometer as against the state average of 75 persons.

The tribal sub-plan area extends fully over the districts of Banswara and Dungarpur, 7 *Panchayat Samitis* of Udaipur district (Jhadol, Sarada, Kherwara, Dhariawad, Salumber, Kotra) and 81

villages of Girwa. Two Panchayat *Samitis* of Chittorgarh district (Arnod and Pratapgarh) and the Abu Road Panchayat *Samiti* of Sirohi districts. The tribals of this area form 66.37 per cent of the total population of the area and 44 per cent of the state's tribal population.

Tribal Sub-plan Scheme

The development schemes of the tribal sub-plan are divided into four types :

- (1) Schemes for the development of infra-structures such as medium, major and multi-purpose irrigation projects, electrification, construction of roads, etc.
- (2) Community benefit schemes such as animal husbandry, forestry, medical and health, education, drinking water facilities etc.
- (3) Individual beneficiary schemes such as sericulture, farm forestry, growing of *ratanjot*, horticulture, fisheries, dairy development, minor irrigation, I.R.D. etc.
- (4) Job oriented training schemes such as I.T.I., Compounders' training, nurses training, stockman training, training for the manufacture of Bidi, Trysem etc.

Analysis of tribal sub-plan development in various five year plans—

First we shall see the financial investment under various funds from the sources for the tribal development programmes in Rajasthan.

Table—6
Development Expenditure During Plan Periods for Tribals

Periods		(in lakh Rs.)				
		Sources of investment				Total
		S.P.	S.C.A.	I.F.	C.S.S.	
II	Five Year Plan	583.90	—	—	—	583.90
III	Five „	932.56	—	—	—	932.56
IV	Five „	1064.18	—	—	—	1064.18
V	Five „					
	(1974-78)	5481.36	739.70	125.40	826.35	7172.81
	(1978-79)	2609.18	301.55	125.71	292.15	3328.59
	(1979-80)	3029.18	291.33	114.47	210.55	3645.53
VI	Five Year Plan					
	(1980-81)	3460.73	275.70	205.19	299.19	4240.81
	(1981-82)	4428.38	327.45	143.53	231.00	5130.31
	(1982-83)	4419.14	372.20	346.74	395.59	5533.67
	(1983-84)	6417.27	491.37	325.24	397.43	7631.31
	likely					
	(1984-85)	8192.10	730.42	327.58	460.78	9710.88
VII	Five Year Plan					75279.00

If we compare inflows from the state Plan to the tribal Sub-plan, the position emerges as follows :

Table—7
State Plan and Tribal Plan : A Comparison

(Rs. in lakhs)

S. No.	Year	State Plan	Flow to tribal sub-plan	Percentage
1.	Fifth Plan (1974-78)	61107.69	5481.36	8.97
2.	(197-879)	23597.07	2609.18	10.59
3.	(1979-80)	29018.89	2029.18	11.23
4.	(1980-81)	35381.17	3382.40	9.56
5.	(1981-82)	36001.51	4554.03	12.65
6.	(1982-83)	34001.00	4516.67	13.23
6.	(1983-84)	34001.00	4516.67	13.28
7.	(1983-84)	41600.00	4967.69	11.94
	(Proposed)			
	(1984-85)	80897.50	8192.10	10.13
	(Proposed)			

It will be seen from the above table that in 1980-81, 1983-84 and 1984-85 the expenditure went down below the normal flow of 9 per cent. In 1982-83 it was upto 13.28 which was the highest since the launching of the programme. The proportion between the state and tribal population was in 1981 Census 87-80 : 12.20 indicating the fact that tribal proportion of investment is not satisfactory. It is difficult to explain the failure of tribal development with any single cause. Even then, the major cause is lack of funds. It is clear that compared to the non-tribals, the tribals received, as the table shows, lesser.

What has been the outcome of our development efforts made by the Five Year Plans in terms of involving the tribals in the mainstream ? For one thing we are certain : the tribal isolation which had been a historical phenomenon for them, has been broken. Transport and communication have made their inroads in the tribal interior parts. Urbanisation and industrialisation have developed migration among the tribals. Land is increasingly becoming a lesser source of livelihood of the people. There is a definite move from isolation to mainstream. But where do the tribals stand vis-a-vis non-tribal groups in the national mainstream, is a subject for further enquiry.

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*The author is indebted to Prof. S.L. Doshi of Sukhadia University, Udaipur, for the comments and suggestions.

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POLITICAL MOBILIZATION OF THE BHAGAT BHILS AND THEIR ROLE IN THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE IN THE FORMER PRINCELY STATE OF BANSWARA

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The Bhagat Movement under the leadership of Guru Govindgiri (1907) and the activities of Bhil Sewa Sadans at Dohad (1922) and Jhalod (1923) in the Panchmahal District (Gujarat), the Harijan Sewak Samiti (1933), Partapur (in the Banswara State) and the Banswara Rajya Prajamandal (1945) brought about political mobilization among the Bhils of the Banswara State. This resulted in their alignment with the mainstream of national life during the colonial period. The Bhagat Movement gave rise to a new endogamous group among the Bhils known as the Bhagats in 1907. These Bhagat Bhils dissociated themselves from the traditional Bhil elite such as the *Gametis* and assumed the role of a progressive group among the Bhil tribe.¹ They commanded a domineering position among the non-Bhagat Bhils for their being *sanskritised* and initiated into Bhagatism. The harassment of Guru Govindgiri and his disciples by the Rajput rulers of Banswara, Dungarpur, Sunth, Idar, etc., for considering themselves superior to upper castes and for reducing the *Abkari* receipts of the States by discarding the use of liquor changed the complexion of the Bhagat Movement.

Bhagat Bhil Uprising at Mangarh (1913)

Punja Dhiriji, a literate Bhil *Gameti* of Dungar (in Sunth State) and the principal adviser of Guru Govindgiri, in the meeting at Salagrao Mahadeo (in Banswara) with the Bhagat leaders of Garhi and Bhukia (in Banswara), Dungarpur, Limdi (Jhalod Mahal, Panchmahal District) and Sunth decided to establish a Bhil kingdom by coercing the States of Banswara and Sunth. This transformed the socio-religious movement of Guru Govindgiri into a distinctly political one. It brought Govindgiri and his followers in armed conflict with the States of Banswara, Dungarpur and Sunth and the British Government at Mangarh on 17 November, 1913. The suppression of the Bhil rising by the Mewar Bhil Corps and the forces of Native States discredited the militant group of the Bhagats. Punja and several Bhagat *gametis* of Banswara State

were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment but E. G. Colvin, Agent to the Governor General in Rajputana, saved Guru Govindgiri from the gallows on the plea that the latter's execution would give a blow to the legitimate aspirations of the Bhils and undermine the influence of the Bhagat Movement among them. Govindgiri was released in 1923 after undergoing imprisonment for ten years. He spent the last days of his life, from 1923 to 1931, in the Panchmahal District (in Gujarat) for his being exiled from the place of his activities in the southern Rajputana States. The suppression of the rising of Bhagat Bhils made the Bhagats hostile to the British as well as to the Bhils of the Mewar Hill Tract.

Banswara : Stronghold of the Bhagat Movement

The southern part of Banswara State comprising the estate of Garhi was transformed into a stronghold of the Bhagat Movement, specially after 1913. The satellites of Govindgiri Baba who had disappeared at the time of the Mangarh Bhil rising, after wandering from place to place, raised their flags and established their *dhunis* in some of the villages of Banswara State which they found congenial. The Bhagat Bhils of the southern part of Banswara State accompanied by new disciples for initiation ceremony visited Govindgiri at Jhalod as a sort of pilgrimage. This device ensured a continuous influx of the Bhils to the Bhagat fold while it turned several of the villages in southern part of Banswara State into a citadel of the Bhagat Movement by 1927.

The Bhils, specially those belonging to Katara, Maida, Rat, Chanran and Girassia septs had embraced Bhagatism while the Hinger Bhils showed a mixed reaction. Bhukia Thakur, Mana of Phalwa and his brother Kalia, Chokla Bhagat of Jher, Choka of Munadurgi, Motia of Sangaria, Rawala of Tarkian, Rupasir Baba, Sadhu Chaitangir, Sulabji, Dhoria of Chainpur, etc., were their leaders. The Thakur was the moving spirit behind the Bhagat Movement; he had given refuge to some of the Bhagat *Sadhus* and Babas in defiance of the order of the Dewan of Banswara. Several disciples of Govindgiri preached from village to village and converted the Bhils to Bhagatism. Under their influence the converts abjured meat and liquor. The Bhagat preachers sang devotional songs in the night to attract more Bhils to their sect.

Political Mobilization of Bhagat Bhils

The Bhagat Bhils of Banswara were politicized by their regular interaction with Govindgiri in the Panchmahal District and their attending with him the Annual Bhil Conferences held under the auspices of the Bhil Seva Mandal, Jhalod—a Hindu Missionary Society for social and educational work among the Bhils of Panchmahals and the

adjacent States. Moreover, the visits of the volunteers of the Bhil Seva Sadan of Dohad in the Bhil villages of Banswara for social work brought them into the mainstream of national life by 1931. The Bhil boys of Banswara received education in the school run by Bhil Seva Mandal at Bhimpuri. Two Bhil boys of Sillopat (in Banswara) had participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement in the Panchmahal District and were sentenced to six months imprisonment.

On 16 April 1927, the Annual Bhil Conference held at Jhalod was presided over by Vallabh Bhai J. Patel, then President of the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee. On that occasion, national songs were sung and the Bhils were exhorted not to drink and to do away with other social evils. A.V. Thakkar in his speech said that the so-called high caste Hindus had not only neglected these primitive people, but had also exploited them and dispossessed them of their lands and produce. Such seditious remarks against the Rajput rulers in the annual Bhil Conferences in the Panchmahals, combined with the religious touch given by Govindgiri, turned the Bhils against their rulers as revealed by their defiance of the laws, and orders issued from time to time in the Banswara State, and by their refusing to perform forced labour (*Begar*) in 1927. Motia, a young top echelon Bhagat of Sillopat and a close associate of the Thakur of Bhukia, had gathered from this Annual Bhil Conference that the Bhils would have a *Swaraj* in Banswara very soon and Govindgiri had assured him its fulfilment by a miracle.

Motia and other Bhil Bhagats saw in the freedom struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi their opportunity for the restoration of *Bhil Raj* and redemption from feudal exploitation and forced labour as well as deliverance from foreign rule. They freely publicized in Garhi and in its adjoining villages in the southern part of Banswara State that the Samvat 1984 (1927 A.D.) was going to be a year of wonder; that Rajputs, Banias, Brahmins, sepoys, Sindis (meaning Afghan and Baluchi moneylenders) all would perish and only those Bhils who were disciples of Govindgiri would survive, and there would be a Bhil Raj. The British Government and Kushalgarh Raoji were helping the Bhagat Bhils, because the Dungarpur Sahib (meaning the Political Agent, southern Rajputana States, Dungarpur) had forwarded to their *Bhil Raja* a silver horse and *Nakkara* and *Nishan* granted by the *Badshah*. In fact, this propaganda had ensued from the speeches delivered in the Annual Bhil Conference at Jhalod by A.V. Thakkar and other political leaders for *Swaraj* in India, but the excitable and imaginative minds of Motia and other Bhil Bhagats construed it as an

assurance for a *Bhil Swaraj* in Banswara. Motia resorted to this propaganda as a device mainly to draw a greater number of Bhils into the vortex of the Bhagat Movement. N. Bhattacharya, Dewan of Banswara State, gave credence to it in view of his sad experience of the Mangarh Revolt. He dubbed politicking by Motia and other Bhagat preachers as seditious and detrimental to the State. Therefore, he suppressed this propaganda in Banswara State by repressive measures between 1927-31 but he could not suppress the political aspirations of the Bhagat Bhils. Their interaction with the Gandhian workers of the Harijan Sewak Samiti, Partapur (1933) and the Banswara Rajya Prajamandal channelized their energies in the freedom movement of the Banswara State during 1945-48.

Participation of the Bhagat Bhils in the Prajamandal Movement

Since the establishment of the Banswara Rajya Prajamandal by the Gandhian workers in April 1945, the Bhagat Bhils had collaborated in its activities.² Deepa Bhagat and Deva Bhagat represented the tribals at the central organisation of the Banswara Rajya Prajamandal in Banswara town while Lunja Bhagat of Bhadkot, Dhola Bhai Bhagat of Cheep, Hemta Bhagat of Wadgun, Kubla Bhagat of Padoli, Kering Bhagat of Kela Mela and others worked among the tribals through its branches and wards extending over the important towns of Ghatol and Partapur and several villages in the State. These Bhagat Bhil leaders mobilized the tribals to participate in the Prajamandal movements against feudal oppression and exploitation and for establishing a responsible government under the aegis of the Maharawal of Banswara State between 1945 and 1948.

In November 1945, the *Banswara Rajya Prajamandal* demonstrated its concern for the problems of tribals by raising its voice against *begar* and by pressurising the State to reform the forest laws. In March 1946, the Bhil peasants along with the non-Bhil students and women participated in the Grain Agitation organised by the Prajamandal in the Banswara town against the defective rationing system of the State. This agitation ended with the release of *Prajamandal* leaders from jail³ and the formation of a Grain Association comprising the businessmen and Prajamandal workers for the proper supervision of the supply of rations in the villages of Banswara State.⁴

During 1946-47 the Bhil peasants launched the anti-levy campaign on the call of the *Banswara Rajya Prajamandal* since the imposition of levy on grain reserved for their subsistence was against the levy regulations. The grain agents, with the support of the state officials and

police, searched the houses of the peasants and coerced them to surrender their grain stock leaving nothing for their continued subsistence especially at a time when the state could neither control prices nor could supply sufficient quantity of foodgrains, cloth, sugar, and kerosene under the rationing system. For example, on 27 June 1946 Rupsingh Patel of Ghatol was so much infuriated with the strictness in the collection of grain levy that he set fire to his house while the Bhil and non-Bhil peasants assembled there to protest against the grain levy. Occurrences of such cases of repression and the frequent attempts of the State officials to prevent the Bhil peasants from attending the Prajamandal meetings nurtured resentment among them. On the night of 7 April 1947, the levy party provided a spark in the explosive situation by confiscating the entire quota of three maunds of maize from the house of Nagji Bhil of Mahudo Kheda, despite his entreaties to spare it for his family of thirteen members. When he declined to carry maize from his house in *begar*, the police tied him with a rope, abused him, and finally released him on bail. On 8 April, the Bhil peasants of Mahudo Kheda publicly raised their voice against the grain levy by not performing *begar* for the removal of the stock of maize levy from their village on the plea that they required it for their sustenance.

On receiving the news of the mobilization of the state forces against the village of Mahudo Kheda, the Bhil peasants assembled with their traditional arms to resist the state forces. The transformation of the non-violent levy campaign into an armed rebellion was spontaneous and a sign of simmering discontent among the Bhils against the grain levy, *begar* and forest regulations. The timely intervention of Dhola Bhagat and Bhupendra Nath Trivedi, President of the *Banswara Rajya Prajamandal*, and others on 9 April 1947 restrained the state forces from turning the rebellion into another Mangarh tragedy, prevented its spreading to the neighbouring villages, and forced the Bhil insurgents to adopt peaceful means for the redress of their grievances.⁵ The failure of the Bhil agitators to secure any concession and the hostile and repressive attitude of the State authorities eventually caused the anti-grain levy campaign to wither away. However, the state authorities could not detract the Bhils from the *Prajamandal*. The assimilation of the Bhil peasants through the anti-levy agitation into the state politics and their sustained participation in the subsequent *Prajamandal* activities was a great victory for the *Banswara Rajya Prajamandal*.

In December 1947 the Bhils launched the anti-rent campaign on the direction of the Prajamandal for the establishment of a responsible government in the State. The repressive measures of the *jagirdars* and

the State police could not dissociate the Bhils from the Prajamandal activities. In the Prajamandal meeting at Khandu on 14 January 1948, Deva Bhagat and Deepa Bhagat demonstrated their steadfastness by turning down the proposal of some non-Bhil members for paying the rent for the current year. They strengthened the campaign by their determination to prolong it till the attainment of its objective.

The anti-rent campaign lingered on even after the formation of the responsible government (March 1948) and on its dissolution and subsequent integration of the Banswara State into the United State of Rajasthan (April 1948) as the political transformation had placed the Bhils in direct conflict with the *jagirdars*. The Bhagat Bhils and non-Bhagat Bhils organised their committees to intensify their struggle against *begar* and to prevent their oppression, exploitation and unauthorized eviction by the *jagirdars* from their lands. They even burnt the jungles such as that of Khera Dabra in Ghatol to pester the *jagirdars* so that they might restore them their forest rights. The United State of Rajasthan ended this strife between the Bhils and the feudal lords by depriving the *jagirdars* of their police, judicial, revenue and forest powers. This radical measure completely snapped the link between the tribals and the *jagirdars* and minimised opportunities for the harassment of the former by the latter. It pacified them and infused into them a sense of unity and identity with the national government. Moreover, it facilitated the termination of the anti-rent campaign as well as the restoration of law and order in the newly created district of Banswara by August 1949.

The *sanskritization* and political mobilization of the Bhagat Bhils of southern Rajasthan made them instrumental in accelerating transition among the tribals and to gear them to the mainstream of national life during the colonial period. They had taken an initiative in organising a political protest against feudal oppression and for the attainment of *Swaraj* in the Banswara State (1913 and 1931) long before the urban elite organized the Banswara Rajya Prajamandal (1945). The politically dynamic Bhagat Bhils collaborated with the Banswara Rajya Prajamandal for agrarian reforms and democratisation of the State administration during 1945-48. They provided a mass base to the Prajamandal for attaining these objectives by mobilizing the support of the whole of the Bhil community in the rural areas. It was owing to their cohesion and unity with the non-Bhagat Bhils that the tribals were freed from feudal control. They successfully interacted with the non-Bhagat Bhils and urban elite during the freedom struggle. Their emergence as the political elite among the tribals compels one to disagree with the view of R.S. Mann and

M.S. Bedi that social transformation among the Bhils of Rajasthan through the Bhagat Movement caused alienation from their substantive group⁶ and served as a depressant in the building up of a tribal movement against exploitation.⁷ The positive role of the Bhagat Bhils during the national movement was not only confined to the southern Rajasthan but it was also perceptible in other parts of India as revealed from the study of K.S. Singh.⁸

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2. The Banswara Rajya Prajamandal was formed on 27 April, 1945 with Manishankar Nagar as President and Dhulji Bhai Bhavsar as Secretary.
3. The following Prajamandal leaders were released from the jail—Bhupendra Nath Trivedi, Dhulji Bhai Bhavsar, Shankar Dev, Suraj Karan, Chandan Bahin, Shrimati Vijaya Bahin (Secretary Women Organisation of the Banswara Rajya Prajamandal), etc.
4. Leaflet entitled : *Banswara Rajya-ki-Janata-ka Anāja Andolana aur javalanta Vijaya*, Published by Bhupendra Nath Trivedi, President, Banswara Rajya Prajamandal, Banswara, 11 March, 1946.
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THE GIRASIA "EKKI" MOVEMENT

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The Girasias are a primitive and neglected tribe of Rajasthan, having insular habits, "the World unknowing and unknown by the World". This tribe is spread over contiguous territories of Kotra, Gogunda and Khairwada *tehsils* of Udaipur district, Bali and Desuri *tehsils* of Pali district, Banaskantha, Mahikantha and Rewakantha of erstwhile states of Gujarat, but are mainly concentrated in Abu Road and Pindwara *tehsils* of Sirohi district. They are a freedom loving tribe, simple, innocent, honest people who do not suffer from defeatist mentality.

During the British era, the appointment of *Talatees (Patwaris)*, the decision of Bombay Board of Directors in 1819 A.D. regarding land policies, introduction of settlement operations, restriction on cutting of forests, hunting and *walar* cultivation, curtailment of rights of tribal *panchayat*, interference in witch-hunting, magic beliefs, rites and rituals, prohibiting manufacture of liquor, rise in the price of salt and mismanagement in its distribution were considered interference in socio-economic, religious and cultural spheres, which they never liked.

Not only this, the Girasias were totally dissatisfied with the state authorities because they were playing in the hands of the British Resident. They were unhappy with the policies of Major Pritchard, the Secretary to the Agent to the Governor General. There were series of incidents which caused disturbances in the tribal areas. In 1887, British soldiers were attacked by the Girasias at Girwar pass killing 12 of them. *Bolai* and *Rakhwali* taxes also created a gulf between the two. The East India Company did not understand the real problem of the tribals and looked at it only from the point of view of the *jagirdars*. This led to a legacy of misunderstanding between the tribals and the British Government. The British Resident at Mewar in 1821 A.D. sent sepoys to control the Girasias; in the encounter some British sepoys and a *thanedar* were killed. The incident of Kheda-ka-sera was also linked with this. The increasing disturbance and lawlessness in the tribal belt compelled the British to think of creating a corps of tribals and hence Mewar Bhil Corps was constituted in 1841. During 1858-1881 British laws pertaining to forest and hunting of wild animals proved very galling to the tribals. The

entire Bhakar and Bhomat area became discontented. *Chhapaniā-kāl* (severe famine of 1899-1900) was followed by plague in Rohira and Kachholi areas which broke the back-bone of the Girasias. The settlement operation also created confusion among the Girasias; the Patels thought the settlement would lead to encroachment over their privileges and rights. The share which they obtained in the name of gods and goddesses would not be available to them if the whole land were surveyed, measured, and assessed by the State. It would also affect the popular image of the Patel who was considered competent to give *khoota (patta)* to a new-comer. Allotment of land to new settlers, settlement of field boundary disputes, and other petty revenue matters in the villages would be done by revenue officers encroaching on the traditional rights of the Patel and the tribal *panchayat*. Thus the tribal *panchayat*, village Patel, and religious leaders like *devalā* and *bhopā* all felt to be in great danger and jointly decided to oppose the settlement operations. They appealed to the Girasias to resist the settlement operations, because it was also feared that the *talaties* (patwaris) would make wrong survey entries and records of rights, depriving them of their legitimate land ownership. The Girasias, however, not only refused to render help in the survey operations but they were even prepared to resist the surveyors and collies who might be brought in from outside.

The grievances of the Girasias were genuine but the Darbar officials did not think of solving them. When the situation in the tribal area became alarming, Moti Lal Tejawat, a *bania* of Udaipur, who had experience of working among the tribals, knowing the tense situation among the Girasias, came to Bhakar in the first week of January 1922. He organised the Girasias by impressing on them the need to preserve unity and to resist exploitation by the English and the Sirohi Darbar. The Darbar officials did not pay attention to Girasias discontent, called Moti Lal Tejawat, charged him of exploiting the tribals for his selfish interests and did not allow other public workers to go and find out the reasons of tribal discontentment. To make matters worse, State's threats of arresting and killing the tribals and Moti Lal only hardened the attitude of the Girasias. The Government even when admitting the grievances regarding *begar*, *rasad*, excessive taxation and harassment did not provide redress and left the situation in the hands of the subordinate officers who were incapable of understanding the extent and intensity of discontent. The State authorities displayed an unbelievable incapacity in not understanding the strong consciousness among the Girasias. This led to severe unrest amongst the Girasias which resulted into the tragedy of Siyawa i.e. the first episode of Girasia '*Ekkī*' movement.

First Episode at Siyawa

The Girasias of Siyawa and nearby villages, it was alleged, had not paid the *Rajbhog* and resisted all officials who came to collect the revenue. On 6th April, 1922, nearly 200 men were sent from Sirohi to recover State dues. On 8th April, 1922, the Girasias and Bhils attacked the Darbar's patrolling staff and wounded one soldier. Later, they looted the liquor and tea shops.

On 12th April, 1922 an army was sent to suppress the Girasias. The army advanced towards Siyawa, halted at river Banas and opened fire at the Girasias from a distance of about 2000 yards which continued upto 45 minutes. The Girasias could hardly offer any reply to the fire-power. Nearly 100 huts out of 140 huts were reduced to ashes. Dalla, Dita and Bhuta, sons of Girasia Patels Bhima, Dhula, and Varta respectively succumbed to death. Their cattle perished and household articles, ornaments, and weapons were taken away by the State troops.

Second Episode at Bhula

The first *Ekki* movement which resulted in heavy casualties at Siyawa spread to the villages of Valoria, Navawash, Morsh, Shingari, Pavti, and Bhula.

In the month of Magha of Samwat 1978 (1922 A.D.) Moti Lal again contacted the people of Idar, Danta, Mewar and Sirohi State. He convened a meeting at village Bhula under Lilurivarli (Banyan tree), which still stands, where more than 5000 Girasias attended this meeting. It was decided that no one should pay *Rajbhog* (revenue dues) nor taxes to the state officials. All the Girasias took a vow now in the name of Gotraj (clan goddess) not to pay more than a rupee and four annas and five manas (12 seers) of *Makai* (maize) per plough to the State. If State refused to accept it they should continue *Ekki* movement on being harassed by the State.

Not only this but in every village some of the Girasias were appointed Raja, some as Diwān, some as Tehsildārs and Faujdārs to look after the village administration. Likewise at *Patta* level Chief Minister was also appointed who was made responsible for Bhakar areas. Girasia Pitha of Bhula was appointed as King. Girasia Soma and Jiva were appointed Faujdārs, Girasia Khima as Thanedār, Girasia Maning was appointed as Diwān. This document was prepared by Moti Lal himself and kept with the Sanvada Thakur Shri Rawat Sinth who joined *Ekki*

messenger) was appointed who would inform and call so appointed officers when required. Every one was made aware about the duties and responsibilities both for normal days and in the days of distress. The *Ekki* had taken the shape of religious and social movement, also binding on their morals. The Girasias openly said to have started telling that there is no king, that they were the owners of their own land, that they would now proceed to Sirohi and occupy the palace and conduct the Raj administration.

The Sirohi State administration issued a notice to every tribal that henceforth no one would convene meeting of *Ekki*, that every one would pay prescribed *Rajbhog*, that no one would break the rules and regulations of the State laws. State also manoeuvred the big *Jagirdars* to divide the Girasia and break the *Ekki* movement. Accordingly, a meeting of the premier *jagirdars* was called at village Kojra but this did not yield any result. Consequently, Shri Rama Kant Malviya, the Diwan of Sirohi State, ordered Ahmad Khan, the Tehsildar of Rohira village, to persuade the Girasias to come to terms. The Tehsildar of Rohira thereupon asked Manchharam Bohra and Motilal Thakkarji to call Karmla and Hansia Adivasis—the headman of village Valoria. Both Karmla and Hansia expressed their inability to agree. The meeting of Patels (headmen) of all the villages was then convened. In the meeting it was unanimously declared by the Girasias that they would not break the *Ekki* and would pay only the agreed *Rajbhog*. Their decision was "as firm as *Bhakar* (mountains), as strong as the existence of the Gotras". The Brahmins of village Rohira tried to arrange an interview with the Diwan of Sirohi at Rohira. The Girasias declined to go to any other place except their own village Valoria. The Girasias called a meeting of headmen of all the villages where over 6000 tribals assembled. In this meeting Brahmins of Rohira assured to help them and read the message of the Diwan of Sirohi. The Brahmin *Panchas* (Sarvashri Manchharam Nanji, Khuj Prema, Ganga Ramji Bohra, Diwanji, Rupaji, Sakalchand, Oatmalji) told the Girasias that it was not proper on their part to keep relations with other States i.e. Mewar, Idar and Danta and must obey and maintain the rules of Sirohi State. Moreover if they did not come to terms, the troops of the States might march against them. It was an open challenge to the Girasias' assembly. Ratna, Karmla, Vega, and Hansia, the Girasia Patel were excited and replied that they too were ready to fight if the State troops had planned to kill them. All the Girasias then again took an oath to fight against harassment and exploitation by the State.

On 4th May 1922 the troops marched to Valoria via Visa. The Girasias made *Sangar* (*morchabandi*) at the Pipal Gar-Dungar on the

way to Valoria and road was blocked with trees and big stones. Sangaxs were also placed on the small hillocks near the place known as Knvioni-wala under Vasa. At well Ajawalo-Tokuwara *morchabaadi* was made. War drum (to communicate warning of external danger) was also kept ready. The women and children fled to hillocks, hid themselves in the pits, stored the grains in the hills for fear lest they should have to remain without food for six or seven days in case of attack. The forces at last arrived at about 7 a.m. There were Diwan Sahib and three *Topiwalas* (Europeans) with him. Two Europeans perched two guns in the front. One of the Europeans who had a flag in his hand put the lenses to his eyes under the tamarind trees and soon the booms of the guns and rifles rent the air. Those who were sitting concealed in the pits on business to apprise the villagers of the danger, fled on hearing the war drum. Showers of the bullets rained upon them. They hid themselves in several places but were shot at. The foremost amongst the victims was Kanha, son of Raja, who fell dead on being struck with a bullet. His brother Lakha turned back to lift him up and was forthwith made a target. Shots followed him wherever he fled, till at last he too fell down dead with five bullets lodged in his body. The third man was Pōona who had managed to get away a little ahead. He was also shot at by the soldiers from up the hills. A Girasia Bhil of village Dimti (in Idar state) who had come to attend a tribal *panchayat*, was also killed. Moreover, Kala, son of Ratna, and Lala, son of Neta, also sustained wounds, the former while he was ascending a hill and latter while standing under a tree. The shot which struck Lala came piercing the tree behind which he had taken up position. Many men and women also succumbed in this way. Many Patels (headman) of the villages in adjoining states (Idar, Danta and Mewar) also fell a prey to the firing but were carried away by their companions. Girasias seeing their brethrens thus ruthlessly slain, fired at the State troops but they were far short of the required range. The machineguns and rifles played incessantly till two in the afternoon.

The State troops set about to loot and burn Valoria village from about 8 a.m. The cavaliers went on throwing in cloths soaked in oil into the houses. The booty comprised of arms, grains, utensils, cloth, etc. What could not be taken away, was either destroyed or burnt. They did not spare even the deserted houses and the posts over the wells. The grain of summer harvest which the Girasias had concealed in the hills, was also traced and carried away over camel back and carts. The forces retired at about 2 p.m.

The State administration sent a message to the tribals that this was done simply to terrify them. They were also told that if they still wanted to defy the State authorities, they should at once leave the State. The Girasias started abandoning the Sirohi State which was a matter of great concern and worry for the State authorities and the Diwan expressed desire to meet the Girasias along with Major Pritchard on behalf of the Agent to the Governor General. On 5th May, 1922 at mid day the interview was held under the large mango tree situated near Arat Bhachalia at Vasa.

The action on the whole was most unjustified. There were many episodes which still fill the hearts of an impartial observer with thrill, horror and astonishment. The children, old and feeble men over 70 years of age, were brutally treated and women were outraged most shamelessly by the troops. The burning of a boy, calf and cows by the troops of a Hindu State was taken very seriously by the people who considered it to be a sacrilege. Though the State and British Government justified the firing on various pretexts such as withholding of payment of revenue, offering of resistance to the State troops, burning of Valoria Thana and sending of defiant replies to conciliatory proposals, yet it was proved that there was wilful killing by indiscreet firing. The whole episode showed criminal negligence on the part of trusted officers—both of the Sirohi State and British Government.

These excuses were not tenable because the revenue was due from the Girasias only for one harvest and the last date of payment had not expired. These facts were proofs enough that the measures adopted by the State were not only extreme but also premature. In the Sirohi State the revenue was paid in kind by the cultivators when the corn was ready for harvest. Most of the Girasia cultivators had not thrashed out their corn till after the occurrence. During the British regime in Rajputana, as a general rule, payment of revenue was made on the last date of Jyestha (corresponding to May) and 30 days of grace were allowed after that day. In Bhakar area usually payment of revenue was assessed on Akshya Tritiya and payment were made as per assessment. Hence there were 25 days to the credit of Girasias after the date of occurrences. Every family had suffered an average material loss of Rs. 250-300 which was more than 15 times the amount of revenue due to the state. The loss in corn alone exceeded the dues by five times. As regards the amount of revenue, the tribals were ready to pay Rs. 1 and 4 annas and 12 *seers* of corn per plough which they claimed to be the old rate. On the other hand, in fairness to the state, these rates were not in conformity with the facilities

received from the State for the revenue they paid. By this it was evident that the question of revenue was only a secondary consideration and that the military action could not be justified on that account.

While charging the tribals with offering resistance to the troops, the Government made no mention of any attack having been made by the state troops. The poor tribals dug pits for accommodating few people so that in time of external danger they might play war drums. To call these pits fortification betrays either a grossly ridiculous ignorance of modern science of war or the habit of turning a mole-hill into a mountain for blindly laying the whole blame on others. Moreover, pits were not used for an attack. Hence these pits were neither fortifications nor any other source of resistance to the troops. Thus, having no substantial charge to make, Government had descended to making vague imputation that the Girasias adopted a defiant attitude but this has no more value than its old game of giving the dog a bad name and then proceeding to hang it.

Firing of *thanas* of Valoria and Bhula were said to be the work of the State Troops and it seems to be correct. This may be accounted in two ways i. e. either the State troops purposely set fire to the *Thanas* in order to create a charge against the Girasias and thus justified the military action of Government troops who were stranger, in their indiscriminate zeal for burning mistook the *thana* for tribal houses and fired them. Apart from this allegation of the tribals against the military, there is another argument, more natural and more practical. It is that the *thanas* at both these places being close to the tribal houses and the wind being violent they might have caught fire by some bits of ignited wood or straw having fallen on them.

No proposals for conciliation in the real sense of the word were sent to the Girasias and to say to that "pay the full revenue as usual, otherwise your villages will be set on fire" was in no sense a proposal of peace or compromise but a challenge or threat. It is on record that the State authorities had made a futile and self-conceited attempt to justify evil means by describing its really worst end as good. No due consideration was given to ensure a sense of moderation and discipline in the behaviour of the troops. To quote the language of the Girasias: "No less than a cart-load of bullets were spent, the volleys coming like swarms of bees." People fleeing in terror were subjected to heavy firing for five hours at a stretch. "The sense of moderation and discipline exhibited by the troops is evident from the shooting of a woman and three cows, the outraging of an old lady, and the burning of well structures."

Regarding casualties, the Government published varying figures. The communique of Simla dated 7th May speaks of 11 men killed while the Governor-General's Agent in his reply to Manilal Kothari's telegram put the figure at 29. Both are silent on the question of the number of wounded. This shows either truth was not being given out to guard against any popular rise of feeling due to a large figure or that the information was reaching the official quarters by degrees. The first is more plausible, as neither the Government had any touch with the Mewar and Idar Bhils nor any elaborate efforts appear to have been made for the ascertainment of figures.

But the highest figure is supplied by the British officer and he was no other than Major Pritchard who had gone to Valoria on the 8th May and said to the Bhils; "We have killed 50 and wounded 150 of your men." We are prepared to admit a slight exaggeration in the figures as intended to make an impression on the Girasias. But we cannot reconcile to the fact that a responsible officer like Major Pritchard, who was Secretary to the Agent to the Governor-General in Rajputana, could have given out a definite figure without being sure of its accuracy, merely to frighten the Girasias. Moreover, he was the officer in charge of the operations.

The Dewan Saheb asked the Girasias to break up *Ekki* which the Girasias refused to do. Upon this the Darbar troops threatened to shoot the tribals and demanded from the tribals to swear before them on Gotraj (clan goddess) that they would break their *Ekki* and return to their respective villages. The oath of Gotraj was taken out of fear, insecurity, and harassment but the Girasias did not agree to break up the *Ekki*. There was unspeakable torture of the Girasias and molestation of women-folk, but the Darbar soldiers felt gratified at having crushed the tribals. The Girasias still show the pits where the drum beaters had been seated, the machine-guns set up, the banyan tree where the military collected their booty and loaded it on carts and camels.

The following table shows the losses incurred by the tribals of Bhula and Valoria villages only.

S.No.	Name of villages burnt	No. of families affected	No. of persons affected	No. of houses burnt or destroyed	Quantity of corn burnt or looted Maunds cartlds	Quantity of hay burnt	No. of animals killed or carried away.	Value of other articles burnt or looted in Rs.
1.	Bhula	210	1150	315	4560	400	25	7,000
2.	Valora	115	650	325	2525	210	83	3,000
	Total	325	1800	640	7085	600	108	10,000

During this military operation, State employed more than 750 soldiers armed with H.M. and M.L. Guns. It was much beyond what was necessary to suppress the Ekki movement.

A report was published in a Gujarati newspaper which for the first time made the outside world aware of the atrocities perpetrated on the tribals. Darbar tried to put the blame on the Girasias for their refusal to pay revenue. It called the report as exaggerated. The facts of misbehaving with the women folk and killing small children mercilessly had been highlighted for the first time. Ultimately, the pacification of the Girasias had to be undertaken because the Darbar felt that it was impossible to crush the tribals. It also came to realise that its image in public eye had fallen and it had suffered a loss of face before the British authorities. The movement also spread to the tribals of Udaipur, Idar and Danta states and thus came to acquire a larger significance, putting the Sirohi Darbar in the dock.

By June 1922, the Sirohi Darbar had to appoint a committee comprising the Revenue Commissioner and Superintendent of Customs to hear the grievances of the Girasias. Although the officials tried to sow seeds of division among the Girasias, they failed and ultimately had to grant following concessions to the tribals :

1. The Girasias and Bhils were to be treated with every consideration. Reconciliation and fair dealings were strictly to be followed by every official.
2. Land revenue and rent concessions were granted.
3. State share was henceforth to be recovered by *Lambua* (a division of the unthrashed crop) and not by *kūnta* in *Unhali* and *Varsāli*.
4. One goat per village was fixed as *Dashera lagat*.
5. The *bijwa lagat* was discontinued.
6. *Khali-chithis* for timber or wood required for construction of huts would now be given by *Thanedar* or *Nakedar* in the tribal villages itself.
7. It was also agreed that the Girasias would supply *begār* for the State purposes and not for other officials.
8. The village of Sakuda was allowed to be cultivated. The fields of Girasias which had been taken away would also be handed over to them.

9. The civil and criminal powers relating to various offences were also given to the tribals and the traditional tribal *panchayats* were strengthened.
10. The realisation of *hasil* by the *patwaris* was stopped and it would be done through *tehsil*, as was done earlier.

This settlement at least closed the most troublesome chapter in the history of the Girasia tribe, which had already persisted for a long period.

Thus the history of Girasia tribals is an unforgettable account of fearless people. It is unfortunate that the records of their contribution have not been preserved by state chroniclers. The tribals had great regard for those rulers who fought for preserving the self respect, and liberty of their people including the tribals, but they did not hesitate to rise against rulers who had become puppets in the hands of foreigners and did not care for the welfare of the people. Their folk-lore has preserved their contribution of standing firm like high *Bhakars* (mountains) and of waging war against despotic control and slavery. The tribals resented violently any interference in their customs and manners. Unsympathetic chroniclers have equated them with brigands and highway plunderers with a view to cloud their healthy resistance to foreign rulers. It is time that the sacrifices and services rendered by the tribal sons of the soil is evaluated properly and the glorious chapter of their unrecorded history is brought to light.

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THE FUTURE OF TRIBAL SOCIETY; A CASE OF THE TRIBAL GROUPS OF RAJASTHAN

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The design of Indian society found in the Constitution consists of a comprehensive culture bound together by the normative and value structures of democracy, socialism, secularism and scientific ethics. The comprehensive culture presupposes sub-societies of the plurality of ethnic groups. The general character of Indian society thus permits the existence of caste society, and, for that matter, of a Muslim society, a Christian society, a Parsi society, and so forth. Such societies should not be jeopardous to the structure and functioning of the wider national society. Their source of survival, in fact, their future, lies in the Constitutional idiom of plurality of cultures. The caste society has maintained its continuity despite several historical upheavels. And it is likely to retain its symbolic and structural identity at least in the near future, for we have enough researches to show that it is dying; but dying very slowly. The Muslim, Christian and other ethnic societies are likely to preserve their identity, perhaps with the binding force of religion. What will happen to the tribal societies in the near future ? Will they be able to maintain their ethnic identity or would lose their social survival in the wake of massive transformation and impact of cultural domination of the containing society ? The question constitutes the major focus of our enquiry here.

Our postulates and some of the related assumptions require a thorough scrutiny and analysis in terms of the future form of wider society. When the plurality of ethnic groups, including the caste, linguistic, and religious groups, pursue to retain, and have succeeded to a great extent in holding their cultural identity, will not the tribal groups seriously work to maintain their individuality and "live" with their characteristic mode of life which is particular to their stock ? Admittedly, the tribal groups all over the country, have enjoyed the status of *target groups* for massive social transformation. They are enjoined with safeties, securities, concessions and measures of protective discrimination to improve their quality of life. In the contemporary situation, the tribal groups on one hand are struggling hard to hold their traditional society together to retain their ethnic character and on the other hand

incorporate themselves in the wider society to improve their style of living. The problems of ethnic identity and incorporation—the trends of their transformation, determine to a great extent their future form of society.

Models of Tribal Society :

When we often talk of “Hindu society,” “Tribal society” or “Indian society,” these are not metaphors. We are talking of these “societies” in substantial terms. In a strict sense, a conglomeration of different tribal groups does not, in any way, constitute a society. For instance, the tribal society does not include all the diverse tribal groups such as Santal, Birhor, Bhil, Chaudhri and many others. In fact, each tribal group has its own ethnic and social profile with a historical specificity. In this sense it constitutes a society in itself, viewed from this point of view, there are as many tribal societies as there are tribal groups in the country or a state. This, however, does not apply to the caste society. There could not be a caste society, for a particular caste is a part of the total hierarchy of caste system. Any single caste cannot be comprehended in isolation from the total system. For the tribals, however, there is no organic and hierarchical interaction between their different groups. Each tribal group is a full system in itself and therefore, rightfully enough, it assumes the status of a society. When we talk about the tribal society of Rajasthan, we are actually talking about, say six tribal societies of six major tribal groups—Meena, Bhil, Bhil Meena, Garasia, Damor and Saheria—of the state.

The massive processes of social change provide two models of society for imitation to the tribal groups in general. One is the model of what N.K. Bose calls the Hindu method of tribal absorption (1941). The second form of society made available to the tribals is the one which is called democratic—socialistic—secular or the nation society. The controversy over the trends leading to the acceptance of a particular design of society for the tribal groups in the country centres round “tribe-caste-class” processes. It is argued that the tribal society in its final process of national incorporation would follow the course, in the first phase of attaining the structure of caste society, and in the following phase the status of a nation state. The nation society, however, it must be stressed, assumes the simultaneous existence of diverse ethnic societies.

Tribal Society Towards Caste Society :

Caste society is essentially a Hindu society. What Bose termed *Hindu method of tribal absorption* was called *Hindu assimilation of the*

so-called aboriginal peoples by Ghurye (1959 : 133-174). Recently, M.N. Srinivas (1952), has conceptualised the tribal process of transformation by what he calls *Sanskritisation*. In fact, since the period of British Raj when the isolated tribal groups got exposure to the Hindu civilization, it is being analysed with a vantage point that the tribal groups are marginal to Hindu society and their future only lies in their incorporation with the caste Hindus. Even the British scholars argued the same course of integration for the tribals.

N.K. Bose while arguing for the tribal absorption in Hindu society puts the plea that in the caste system the productive activities of various castes are protected against competition from other castes. This attracts tribal groups to come within the caste fold even if they are accorded a lower status. Yet another reason for the easy absorption of tribal society into caste society is the superior technological base which the latter provides. It was the technical efficiency rather than the superior political power of the Brahminical civilization that attracted the tribal communities to it. There was another factor behind the attraction, and this was the right given to all communities to practise their distinctive customs even when they were arranged in a hierarchy (Andre Beteillie : 1975 : 5).

Ghurye is more emphatic in his statement while analysing the "Sanskritic traits" in tribal society. He makes a purposive historical analysis of the findings of some of the British ethnographers and census officers. Conveniently, thus, he infers (op. cit: 18-19):

"It is seen from the above discussion that almost all the so-called aboriginal tribes of the region have a Hinduised section, small or large, that they have been in fairly intimate contact with the Hindus in matters of religion and gainful occupation. They have shown a tendency to look upon themselves as Hindus or a people closely connected with the Hindus. They seek to improve their social position by asserting themselves to be Hindus...."

Ghurye prefers to describe tribal groups as *Backward Hindus* and sees their future only in accepting a "room" in the caste system. For him, Hindu society and caste society are synonymous.

Srinivas follows the same caste model for the tribals. He, on the basis of social evidence found among the Coorgs, observed a tendency among the communities lower down the run to emulate the life-style of the dominant castes of the region, who in turn would try to conform to all-India scriptural norms. By this process of emulation, the castes lower

down the rung, would move up in the caste ladder. *Sanskritisation* does not proceed in the village as an independent process; it is superposed on non-Sanskritic cultural forms, such as tribal and Muslim, through accretion rather than simple replacement. Bailey provides empirical evidence (1960) that tribals are adopting Hindu ways of life. The Konds (Orissa-kondmal) in order to attain economic betterment strive hard to conform to a good standard of Oriya behaviour without, however, claiming for any caste status, the latter being not much of his concern.

The problem of the relations between the tribal groups and the Hindu caste system has thus been examined both historically and ethnographically by social anthropologists and historians. Hutton long back tried to establish that there are organic links between many cultural idioms of Hinduism and the tribal cultures. D D. Kosambi (1956) also maintains that many cultural items of the contemporary peasant Hindu culture have their origin in the aboriginal cults and cultural patterns. There are, however, as discussed earlier, census commissioners and anthropologists such as Risley, O'Malley, and Elwin who hold that the tribal and Hindu traditions are separate.

The views about the future form of tribal society held by a large number of social scientists is that of caste society. It largely suffers from structural obsessions, Hindu imperialism and prejudicial analysis. We need to look at the problem with a demystifying and debunking notion. Before we dwell on this analytical part of the issue involved and discuss the class character of tribal groups, let us first answer to the questions: What is the peculiar "style", "idiom" or particularistic-specificity of the tribal social structure which provides it a historico-cultural identity like other plural ethnic groups? In other words, what are the key principles of the structure of tribal society which account for its survival? We examine these questions with reference to the empirical situation of the tribal and wider society of Rajasthan.

The Traditional Unifying Bonds of Tribal Society

Each tribal group is a separate and an autonomous ethnic entity. Quite unlike the individual caste group which is a part of the large whole—the caste system, the tribal group enjoys a distinct identity. Its society has shared values, style of life, exclusive symbol of identity and a consciousness of kind. Sociologists working on the caste system argue that the system is kept united on two principles: segregation and hierarchy (Bailey: 1963). Segregation means that each caste has its own separate identity from the rest of the innumerable castes in terms of

(1) caste name, (2) occupation, (3) residence, add (4) diacritical customs or customary distinctions. Do the different tribal groups possess similar kind of segregation from other tribal groups and the non-tribal groups of the wider society? In other words, does tribal society has some principles which keep it united or bestow on it a distinct identity? Then, in the final analysis, does the principle of segregation if found in the tribal society provide it a continuity and survival? The caste principle of hierarchy, however, is non-existent with the tribal society. Among various tribal groups in the country or a region, there is nothing of the kind of structural formulations which bind them into a system. For instance, the Bhil, Dubla, Tharu, Kond and Gond do not together constitute a tribal system. Each group has its own life ethos, historical individuality and ethnicity. In such a situation there is not any system of hierarchy among these various tribal groups. Hierarchy could be intra-tribal; it is not inter-tribal. We now return to the principle of tribal segregation.

A casual analysis, of the anthropological literature would lead one to infer that the tribals society is kept together by the forces of segregation (quite like the caste system) and segmentary character of its community organisation. These forces have emerged out of historical processes and have given a specific design to the tribal society. But do they have any relevance in the context of present day massive change over remains to be discussed and analysed.

Tribal Attributes of Segregation : The Rajasthan Situation

According to the census of 1981, the tribal population of Rajasthan consists of 34,261,862 persons forming 12.21 to the general population. There are some districts which have a preponderance of tribal numerical strength in the general population. The districts having larger tribal size in proportion to the general population are Banswara (72.63%), Dungarpur (64.44%), Udaipur (34.33%), Sirohi (23.11%) and Sawai Madhopur (22.67%). To the intermediate size of tribal population in terms of percentage to general population, may be included the districts of Bundi (20%), Kota (14.83%), Jhalawar (11.67%), Tonk (11.80%), Jaipur (11.12%), and Bhilwara (9.23%). Below this size of tribal population are the districts of Alwar, Jalore and a few others. It must be observed that there is no district in the state which does not have any tribal population. However, the districts situated in the desert zone have negligible tribal population.

The southern districts of the state, namely, Banswara, Dungarpur, Chittorgarh, Udaipur and Abu Road of Sirohi constitute the sub-plan area. The region thus covers 5605 villages and 4,77,257 households.

The major scheduled tribes inhabiting the state are : Bhils, Bhil-Meena, Damor, Garasia, Meena, and Saheria. Besides the six major scheduled tribes inhabiting the state are : Bhils, Bhil-Meena, Damor, Garasia, Meena, and Saheria. Besides the six major scheduled groups, there are about 21 other minor groups mostly found in the Abu Road *taluka* of Sirohi and Sunel Tappa of Jhalawar district.

Segregation among the tribals is achieved in several ways. Each tribal group has its own name—Bhil, Meena, Damor and so forth. There are differences of residence among the tribal groups. Some tribals live in the *Pals*—a cultural region cut off by hills and forests vis-a-vis plains. There are others who inhabit the villages of plains. The *Pal* tribals usually reside in scattered villages whereas the tribals in the plains are found in compact caste Hindu villages. In the scattered villages, normally each tribal hutment is erected on the hill top with the fields in the surrounding area. Such a habitation pattern of village settlement is typical not only of the tribals of Rajasthan but is a common characteristic with most of the tribal groups of the country. The scattered pattern of habitation keeps the tribals segregated from the plains, i.e., the mainstream of civilisation. This has been a historical feature of tribal India.

Besides a *name* and a *residence* pattern for each tribal group, the third form of segregation is *occupation*. The tribals are essentially a hilly and forest people—the *girijan*, and the *Vanvāsi*. They draw their livelihood from the forest and its produce. Traditionally, their occupation in the state has its source related to forest economy. It is only in the recent past that they have taken to agriculture. Though in the national censuses, they have been described as a peasantry, they are not known as skilled cultivators. Their economy has been subsistence one.

Each tribal group has its own occupation which is immediately related to its natural resources. Unlike the traditional occupations which the caste Hindus follow, the tribals do not have any such specific occupational division. Neither is there any check on the competition of occupations as is found among the caste Hindus. A potter is traditionally denied to do the job of a washerman and vice versa. Among the members of a particular tribal group, occupations are open for all. However, the tribals observe untouchability though they themselves are not an untouchable caste. They, therefore, would not take up any occupation which is considered to be polluted. All in all, it must be said that the occupational form of segregation which the tribal groups of the state observe renders them independent of the non-tribal groups.

Bailey (1960: 264-5) while putting much stress on the nature of tribal economy in defining a tribe, the Konds of Orissa, observes :

“Tribals are those who have a control over natural resources. These are, in this respect independent of the Caste Hindus or other non-tribal groups of the region. Tribes cannot be defined in isolation from other groups.”

The fourth form of segregation is a variety of *diacritical customs*. These customary distinctions are ostensible to any observer. Take for instance, the customs observed by the Bhils of southern Rajasthan and the continuous regions of Jhabua of Madhya Pradesh, and Panchmahals of Gujarat. In the field of religion they have their own patron dieties which are invariably invoked on the occasions of *Navaratri* celebrations and emergent situations such as draught and flood. The festivals of *Amri Gyaras* and religious fairs held at different places are common to every member of the tribe in the region. There is, however, some variation in matters of details in the transition rites associated with the rituals of death, birth, puberty, and so forth.

There is a tradition among the Bhils to inflict *dangla*—branded marks of burning on both the forearms of the boys of adolescent age. These are marks of symbolic identity for being a Bhil. The unmarried girl is required by custom to wear a particular kind of *sari* having *pawali-bhunt*—twenty paise coin mark, dyed on it. Such *saris* are found in the local tribal markets. It is symbolic of the fact that the girl is unmarried and negotiations for a match could be made. When going out for a visit as a guest, a Bhil is supposed to arm himself with some weapon, preferably a sword or a bow and an arrow. The weapon is a part of the ceremonial attire of a tribesman. The married Bhil women do not wear any *mang* on their head on the pattern of Caste Hindu women. The rules of marriage among them allow *dapa*, bride price and *devar watta*—marriage with deceased's younger brother. The catalogue of diacritical distinctions typical to the tribe could be detailed and elaborated.

But, are the customary distinctions and various forms of segregation practised by the tribal groups, fundamental sources of tribal identity and survival ? In other words does the tribal basic unity rest upon the principle of segregation ? An analysis of the operationality of the principle would show that in the contemporary situation a tribesman simultaneously belongs to two systems : he is a member of his own tribe, Bhil or Meena. This is his kindred—the extension of his kinship system. It extends to other villages besides his own. The second system to which he belongs is the wider society—members of caste Hindus and other

groups with whom he has relationship in his own village and beyond that. These relationships are not ties of kinship.

If the tribal society has any particularistic-specific character, it does not lie in its segregation. Segregation as we have seen is not a constant phenomenon with a tribal groups. It is a principle which helps only to identify a particular tribal group against the non-tribal one. The only explanation which segregation provides is that we can understand the historicity of a particular masses of people. The future of tribal society which is engaging our attention depends largely on the structure and dynamics which the kinship system witnesses in the present state of massive transformation.

Segmentary Character of Tribal Society :

Another speciality of tribal society is its segmentary character. The members of tribal society remain united by "multiplex" ties. In tribal villages the same set of people interact with one another in politics, ritual, in making a living, and so forth. A person who is *Bhopa*, (religious head), is also a *Bhangaria* (negotiating leader), a *panch*, and the village well off man. The relations are thus multiplex interest relationships. A tribal, therefore, in his behaviour, is jack of all. His roles are undifferentiated. The tribal segmentary society is in a large way contrasted from organic or complex societies. In a broader way our towns and cities constitute an organic society. Relations in caste societies are also governed and regulated through complex ties of single-interact orientations. Here, 'a person interacts with one set of people in politics, another in his religious activities, a third in economic affairs, and a fourth set of people make up his kinsmen. These different sets of people may have no direct connections with one another. Relationships in such societies are specialised.

The segmentary character of tribal society is more or less similar to the attributes of our village society. What makes it particularistic is that there are no specialised roles available within the tribal structure whereas the caste system found at the village level provides such a specialisation. The segmentary design of tribal society is fast disappearing due to the increasing introduction of interdependence among the different kinds of communities. Its structure, therefore, is not likely to characterise the tribal for any longer period of time. In such a situation the future form of tribal society would not receive any 'survival value' from its decaying segmentary structure.

The foregoing discussion on the two principles of the unity and continuity of tribal society, namely, *segregation* and *segmentary* nature hardly stand to any satisfactory empirical verification. We started with the inductive logic that since segregation and segmentation have provided stability and identity to the tribal society in the past, it will do the same for the future to come. Our exercise of applying the principles leads us deductively to the conclusion that the efficacy of the principles has lost their substance.

We have identified only one feature of tribal society, namely, its kinship system which provides it continuity and identity against the wider society. We are tempted to argue that if there could be anything like a tribal society in India distinct and identifiable from the rest of the plurality of various caste and ethnic groups, it would surely rest on the bondage of kinship—the lineage and kindred.

Existential Situations of Crisis and Collapse :

With one stroke of pen the Constituent Assembly declared the formal death of the centuries old caste system. The same could have been done to the tribal society. Its head could also have rolled. But instead of giving it a death blow, the constitution has granted some privileges to the groups in the form of safeties and securities. They suffered oppression and humiliation, exploitation and backwardness for centuries at the hands of superordinate groups, may they be colonial and feudal powers, high caste Hindus and moneylenders. Their loss has been immense. The Constitutional privileges, therefore, are actually protective discriminations for the tribals to improve their quality of life and come on par with the non-tribal groups. In terms of the survival of tribal society, it could be argued that the concessions and privileges of reservations given in various sectors of public life would ultimately create bonds of unity among the various masses of tribals—the 480 odd tribal groups of the country to fall into one society. Let us examine such an argument.

Bailey who has done extensive field work among the Konds of Bisipara and Mohanpur (1963 : 109) of Orissa argues that the political privileges granted to the tribals by way of reservation in Assembly and Parliament have not even succeeded in organising the tribal groups into pressure groups. The vast masses of them have only been reduced to vote banks at the command of a politician qualified to use them. Had the tribals attained the status of pressure groups they would not have been used only at the time of elections. The members of tribal society who have free access to all the schemes and programmes meant for

them, are politically ignorant and apathetic; they only vote on the instructions of their leaders. They are never taught about their new goals which they can achieve by acting as an organised group. This obviously denies them the status of a society.

A crisis situation would emerge the day when the process of de-scheduling begins. The present corporate feeling which is occasionally visible in local outbursts of tribals against their parochial demands is very much temporal and short-lived. More than three decades have passed since the granting of special concessions, reservations and liberal flow of financial assistance for individual and community benefits to the tribals. Leaving aside the case of Jharkhand movement, nowhere in the country, the diverse tribal groups have been able to forge a common platform exclusively of them to create consciousness of tribal ethnicity, something on the pattern of Dalit Panthers inclusive of various groups of untouchables. Neither they have been able to sponsor a joint manifesto containing a comprehensive demand charter of various tribal groups of the nation. Even the mild pro-reservation movement initiated by *some of the tribal groups* of Gujarat (surely not all) in the recent stir did not invoke any response in terms of sympathy, strike, or protest from the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra, all the three bordering Gujarat. The empirical evidence does not support the notion that the protective discriminations have succeeded in creating any structural or interest links among diverse tribal groups to keep them united as a particular society.

One can marshal enough data to demonstrate that during the plan periods the country has spent tons of money on the development of the disadvantaged groups, officially labelled as *target groups*, including the scheduled tribes. The situation all through these periods has worsened instead of showing any improvement. The number of poor has multiplied. Have the tribals developed any ethnic consciousness to organise themselves to fight against their abject poverty in the face of such a huge expenditure made in their name? It is a common experience for any tribal to observe that the "economy" of the government officials belonging to the strategic departments concerned with the immediate implementation of development programmes has shown healthy signs of improvement. They have amassed money beyond their legitimate resources. One could guess that more the money is spent on the development of tribals better is the economic condition of the implementing officials and their personnel and reverse is the lot of the so-called target groups. Does this not arouse antagonism among the

tribals to oppose, condemn and debunk the government development agents ?

The Bhils seem to have a historical tendency to antagonise the ruling groups. Soon after their fall in the ascendancy of Rajput rule they have revolted against the local rulers, the latter always negotiating to keep them 'quiet'. In the aftermath of independence, the tribal *pals* of the districts of Banswara, Dungarpur, and Udaipur have cast their majority of votes in favour of opposition parties. They have been known to drive off census enumerators, vaccinators, family planning units, and other inoffensive parties with bows and arrows. This has in part due to their general hostility to government. The erstwhile socialist party has done tremendous work among the Bhils of the southern region. With this historical tendency of opposing the ruling groups, why has tribal society been not able to get a unified and solid footing ? Do not its poverty conditions put them to-gether to drive out the corrupt officials and their bogey of leaders ?

The question is not difficult to answer. The development work which the government has done for the tribals serves as a hundred per-cent safety valve for any groups of tribals to rise in revolt. Development activities have not only appeased the 'rebeling' tribal masses, but have created polarisation among the general tribals who were in the past a homogeneous stock of people. And then, above all, even the political parties, like the development work itself have neglected the tribal poor along with the rural poor. In such a situation—in absence of any bargaining capacity, the poor tribal society succumbs to the effective physical force of the state on one hand and the benefits of development programmes on the other (Cassen : 1979 : 293)

Looking to the present trend of development which the government and the voluntary agencies are monitoring, it is difficult for the tribal society to attain any degree of stability. In fact, development is working as a destabilising agent for the present structure of tribal society. It is by and large an anti-tribal activity. There is growing landlessness among the tribal people. They already had meagre portions of fertile land, which has undergone tremendous fragmentation with the passage of generations. There have been rising expectations with no fulfilment, employment problems for educated and uneducated alike, social oppression for many, and above all an economy which grows only modestly and in which increasing numbers compete for a share of material prosperity while much of its growth accrues to those already well-off.

The situation seems to be ripe enough for the tribals to seek for some alternatives.

Some optimism is expressed by the 'left' oriented thinkers in the state of Rajasthan when in the current year of 1985 the tribals have shown their militant opposition to the government by creating law and order problems. With the activation of Marxist-Communist party, the Bhils of Kotra-Koliyari—Som region of southern Rajasthan, led organised group of Bhils to loot the Hindu shops in Mamer tribal fair. In Sallopat village, 60 kms south of Banswara district, the Bhil youths set ablaze the tribal hostel building and demonstrated their strength to the officials of social welfare department who run the hostel. Similar stray incidences demonstrating the tribal anger can further be illustrated. But to the mighty force of government, the protests are not even a drop in the ocean. There is no ray of any optimism in such outbursts. It is certain that the tribals in increasing numbers are losing their old forms of security and are moving into more and more uncertain conditions. The hands of government are very strong and it can deal with any situation with all firmness. It appears, the tribals will have to wait longer for their turn.

Trends Towards the Making of Tribal Society

Looking to the present situation of the crisis of tribal ethnicity and identity, let us analyse the trends of social change as envisaged by sociologists and social anthropologists. One such analysis, popular with the social scientists and discussed earlier is that the tribal society would become a caste society and finally a nation society. Analysing the debate on the relations of tribe and caste, Yogendra observes (1973 : 30)

“Ethnographers and historians are undecided on the extent to which a relationship existed between the pre-historic Indus valley culture and the traditional Vedic culture in India..... On the issue of relationship between tribes in India and the Hindu caste system the opinion differs among the social anthropologists and ethnographers. For instance, with the exception of Hutton, who maintains that caste system and other cultural traditions of Hinduism have organic links with the tribal cultures, and of Ghurye, who holds similar views, all other census commissioners and anthropologists such as Riseley, O'Mally, Elwin etc. hold the tribal and the Hindu traditions to be separate; D. D. Kosambi also maintains that many cultural items of the existing peasant Hindu cultural in India have their origin in the aboriginal cults and cultural patterns.”

N.K. Bose, Srinivas and Bailey have conceptualised in the recent past on the basis of empirical data that the tribals would attain a caste status as a corporate body by imitating the *sanskritic* way of life of the caste Hindus. On the strength of the inductive logic given by these empiricists it could be said that the future of tribal society rests on its incorporation in the caste Hindu society. Precisely the argument runs like this : the tribals would become castes in the process of adopting Hindu way of life—the *Sanskritisation*. In a period of two or more generations, it is hoped, they would lose their ethnic-symbolic identity and become a caste society.

It appears that there has been some cultural bias in our interpreting the empirical evidence. Admittedly, the Bhils and for that matter a large number of tribal groups have accepted Hindu deities, festivals, fairs and style of life. But does this lead us to the conclusion that they are being a part of Hindu society. Such a generalisation raises some crucial questions. Incorporation in the Hindu society would mean for the tribals falling into caste hierarchy which is based on purity—pollution complex. The system rests on the theory of transmigration of soul—the cycle of life. Will the coming generations of tribals when adequately educated and awakened confirm their lot with the Brahminical cultural domination which the caste Hindus themselves are demystifying, is a question, answer to which can be anybody's guess. Our hunch is that the tribals would never own the Hindu epics, the humiliation of Eklavya at the hands of Dronacharya and the social profile of the *vanvasis*—the tribals, given by the Brahman authors in Sanskrit literature. All through the Sanskrit literature a tribal is depicted as a shabby looking, ugly, rustic and uncivilized man who eats the flesh of dead animals and does not hesitate to kill a cow and relish its flesh. *Nishad, Kol, Bhil* and so on, are described with all possible hatred of the caste Hindus by the *Puranas, Upanishadas* and *Brahmanas*. Will Ghurye's 'Hinduised tribals' or Srinivas' 'Sanskritised tribals' in the near future own such a Brahminical history of their past ?

Then, the Bhils of Southern Rajasthan consider *Rishbha Deo*—the Jain *tirthankar* as their favourite deity. It is a matter of pride for them to pay an annual pilgrimage to it. The Bhils and also high caste Hindus of the town of Dungarpur celebrate *Ratha Yatra*—a festival of *Digambar* Jains falling sometime in the month of October. Does this mean that the Bhils and the caste Hindus have sought their incorporation in Jainism ? Further, the Bhils and also caste Hindus pay homage to the *Tajias* ? Does it also mean incorporation ? Let us ward off social scientist's cultural prejudices.

Actually the tribal problem of social change has to be interpreted within the framework of ethnic processes. Bouez (1978) rightly analyses the phenomenon of Hindu influence among the Santal of Bihar when he observes :

“The Santals do not claim any caste status, because they prefer to assimilate the Hindu system as a reference which they can reinterpret....The Santal *duplicate the Hindu society, in order not to be absorbed by it, they take Hinduism as a possible set of symbolic conditions for remodelling their own society* (italics mine).

This framework for analysis of the trends of development among the Santal confirms what Gautam describes as *Santalisation*. In his words it would mean “freedom from caste system and independent ethnic status.”

We would like to argue that in the process of the implementation of development programmes by the government, voluntary agencies and other change agents the primitives are moving from tribe to ethnic status. They are actually busy in re-modelling their society. The new trends of remodelling suggest that the group would jump over the caste system and accept a class society which would be non-agrarian and industrial one. Our such a trend analysis, however, requires a little elaboration.

Our argument is based on the contents of the mode of production and production relations. The tribals are basically not agriculturists. They have traditionally been living in hills and forests. Their acceptance of agriculture as a mode of production was a historical accident only. When they came in frequent contact with civilization it was basically a contact with an agrarian society. This, willy-nilly, turned them into agriculturists. The bench mark data collected by the tribal sub-plan area report that the average land holding among the tribals is 5 bighas per family. In a hilly track, when in the plains of the district about 9 per cent of land is irrigated as against 21.28 (1982) of national average, the tribes have negligible incidence of irrigation. The hope of tribals of this region, therefore, lies somewhere beyond agriculture. To improve their quality of life, they will have to accept industrialisation and entrepreneurship as their major source of living.

It would be found that the core of tribal ethnicity lies in its kinship system. It has its spread extended to a couple of villages of the *pal* and the plains. In its new dimension the kinship has extended to industrial towns. The Bhils of Southern Rajasthan are migrating to

the industrial cities of Ahmedabad, Nadiaad, Surat and Vadodra. Punelekar (1980) in his study of stratification among the Dhodias—a migrant tribal group to Surat, observes that it is through firm and dependable kinship ties that the members of the group have migrated to city. Their adoption to city life is quick and over a prolonged stay the original groups are stratified into two distinct social strata: (1) upper social strata of white collar employees, and (2) lower social strata of factory workers, and labourers. Other studies of industrialisation of the tribals of Bihar and Maharashtra could be quoted. The tribals find secular occupations, that is, non-traditional caste occupations quite suitable to their genius. They are much adaptive to these. It is on the basis of this broader trend that we argue, the tribal society of the southern region of Rajasthan in the near future, cautiously enough in the remote future, would be parochial (in kinship terms), particularistic and industrial. The much argued process of tribe-caste transformation gets rejected at least for the tribals of this region. They would jump the caste and attain the status of an industrial class society.

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SAHARIAS OF RAJASTHAN : A TRIBE FROM IGNORANCE TO AWARENESS

SASHI BAIRATHI

For centuries tribes lived in isolated, hilly forest tracts of India. Only occasionally they came into contact with the 'civilized' people of the plains. This physical isolation of tribes was broken down during the British rule when the development of means of communication and transport took place. After that other caste people from a more civilized world started visiting these areas frequently. Many of them settled down in the tribal areas for administrative and economic reasons. With this started cultural contact between the tribals and non-tribals. This cultural intermixing increased considerably after independence when efforts were made by the Government of India to improve the lot of the tribal people with the aim of bringing them closer to the other sections of the society so that they may get merged into the national mainstream. With this started a phase of tribal transformation and awakening. How much Saharias are aware of the most practical and relevant requirements of present day life forms the theme of the present paper.

Data

The data for this paper have been obtained from author's work "Tribal Culture, Economy and Health : A Study of Saharias of Rajasthan" (Department of History, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur). For this study 98 families from three villages of Shahabad Tehsil, which were at different levels of development, were selected. In the study, Survey and Anthropological techniques were merged to enrich the findings. For household survey of 98 families a questionnaire was used to collect general information on family size, economic condition, and health care practices. A smaller number of female respondents (30) were interviewed in-depth to collect attitudinal and behavioural information about education of children, health care, family planning etc.

Life in Pre-Independence Days

The Saharias, once a most primitive and backward tribe of Rajasthan, have been living in Shahabad and Kishanganj tehsils of

Kota district for centuries. They have occupied a continuous small portion of Indian Peninsula, thereby forming a compact Saharia tract. In Rajasthan it covers Shahabad and Kishanganj Tehsils of Kota district which lies beyond the Parbati river in eastern part. On three sides, the Shahabad and Kishanganj tehsils are surrounded by Saharia populated districts of Madhya Pradesh viz. Morena, Gwalior, Shivpuri and Guna. Bestowed with dense forests, green vegetation, hillocks and meadows, rivers and rivulets, heavy rains, the whole Saharia tract is full of natural beauty. The Saharias have been living in this beautiful part of India for centuries enjoying natural life, just like other flora, fauna and animals. Describing their pleasant life, the famous English historian Col. James Tod in 1830s wrote :

Amongst the hills of Narwar, Sheopur and those skirting the left bank of Chambal are found number of these children of nature, whose first wish is to be left to the unmolested enjoyment of the spontaneous gifts of the great mother.....¹

In the pre-independence days the Saharias had very little material requirements, almost all of which were fulfilled by the forests. Their food, hut making material, and agricultural implements—all were available in the forests. Their main occupations were hunting and collection of forest produce. They also performed shifting cultivation and used to eat grain when it was raw. They got the remaining amount of grain and other things of daily use by exchanging forest products with the contractors who used to visit forests from time to time.² As all of their material requirements were fulfilled in these isolated forest tracts, the Saharias remained totally unaware of the frauds of the materialistic civilised world. Their habits were very simple and morals were high. Impressed by their "moral habits" and "reliability" Tod quoted a famous contemporary local saying about Saharias: "Once give a meal to Saharia and he will remember it to the end of his life".³

But this whole economic balance was disturbed during the British period when means of transport and communications developed and outsiders started settling here. They cleared and exploited forests for the purpose of cultivation, business and personal needs. They also started exploiting and oppressing Saharias by employing them on nominal wages, and thereby reducing them to the state of indebtedness and slavery. State

1. Col. James Tod, *Travels in Western India*, London, 1839, p. 49.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

3. Col. Tod, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

personnel and Jagirdars also harassed Saharias by pressing them into *begar*. Their treatment was so intolerable and humiliating that Saharias developed the habit of hiding on seeing the so-called 'civilised man'.

Welfare Works after independence

After independence, the Indian Government took on its shoulders the responsibility of the welfare of all backward sections of the society. Article 46 of the Constitution of India declares :

The state shall promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.⁴

The State Governors were made responsible to promote the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Tribes for which they were entrusted with special powers. The main problems of Saharias were the prevalence of mal-nutrition, illiteracy, poverty, indebtedness, small land-holdings, and ignorance.⁵

In 1956, the State Government introduced a scheme for providing 20 *bighas* of land to each Saharia family, with subsidies for construction of wells, houses and purchase of bullocks.⁶ A plan of model villages was also introduced as a result of which three model colonies viz. Shubhghars, Kushalpura and Ghattaghatti were established.⁷ As the result of these schemes were not satisfactory, the strategy and approach of Saharia development changed from time to time. According to their requirements now Saharias have been divided into various groups and different types of subsidiary in kind is being provided to them. Scheme for providing cash loan has been discontinued as the Saharias either squandered it on their food or on liquor. Now they are provided with goats, cattles, land, seeds, birds (for poultry) etc., on the basis of individual needs.⁸ Various other measures like plantation and forestry, establishment of small scale and cottage industries, organisation of co-

4. Quoted in Nadeem Hasnain's *Tribal India Today*, 1983, p. 151.

5. *Report of Saharia Development Plan* (Revised), 1980-83, p. 3.

6. *Ibid*, p. 3.

7. *Ibid*.

8. For details, see *Report of Saharia Development Plan*, *op. cit*.

operative societies, updating of land records, paying off debts, opening of schools, hostels and hospitals are in progress.

In addition to these welfare works, efforts were also made to stop exploitation of Saharias by higher castes and money-lenders. As legislative measures failed to improve the situation, during emergency period (1976-78) direct action was taken against those persons who had grabbed their lands.⁶ The arms and ammunition of these landlords were also seized to safeguard Saharias. A few of them were even arrested and imprisoned under MISA.¹⁰ These protective measures infused self-confidence and self reliance among the Saharias and filled them with courage to occupy their land themselves. More than three hundred over-zealous Saharias then occupied 1225 *bighas* of their land.¹¹

All these efforts made Saharias aware of the changed environment after independence. Now they have understood very well that no one can oppress them, that they are as free as others and they are happy with this change. An old Saharia expressed his feelings in the following words :

During State times our life was very restless. We had to go for *begar* at the places of rulers and jagirdars immediately on their call. On little delay we were strapped. But now we are free and happy.

Another Saharia said :

In the past, on seeing State personnel, we used to hide due to fear that they will carry us with for *begar*. But now we move freely. No one can oppress us.

New Economic Life

The economic life of Saharias has also changed. Now they have various means of livelihood. Their main occupations these days are agriculture and labour (see Table No. 1). The collection of forest products and hunting have become of secondary importance. Although now they do not starve, their income is still very low which can provide them a bare subsistence only.

9. *Sahabad ke Saharia*, p. 8.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*

Table No. 1
Main Occupation of Saharias (N=98)

Occupation	No. of families
Agriculture only	6
Labour only	67
Agriculture and Labour	22
Service	3
Total	98

SOURCE : Field Work.

The change in their economic condition is not very encouraging seeing the huge funds spent on them. One cause of this is limited interest of Saharias in agricultural operations. They are over keen to get land but they do not cultivate it with that interest. They work happily as labourers on fields of others, but their own land remains ignored. Living under extreme poverty and slavery for centuries, they have become lazy and indifferent to their development. They have accepted their disabilities as their fate which they cannot change. Many Saharias, however, are very sensible and progressive and are keen to change their lot. They are also aware of the cause of their backwardness, as a young Saharia reported us :

I do hard work. I produce two crops in a year. In summers go for labour. So my economic condition is quite good in comparison to other Saharias. In fact Saharias are very lazy and do not want to work. If they work hard they can earn a good living.

The other causes for slow progress are bad quality of land allotted to the Saharias, fear of failure of crop, and corruption in implementation of welfare works.

Perception about advantages of education

Education is an important media for bringing about change and awareness in any society. That is why a large number of schools and hostels are being opened in Saharia belt. In addition to giving free education, the Saharia children are provided with scholarships, clothes, food etc. so that they may be attracted to educational institutions. But the availability of these facilities is not the only condition to spread literacy in any society. The presence of desire to educate their children in that society is also equally important.

Discussions with Saharias revealed that their perception about the importance of education is not low. All of them now are aware of the utility of education in the present day life and want to educate their children. Few Saharias even prefer to send their children to such schools where they have to pay fee because in these schools teaching is good. Expressing the eagerness to educate his children a Saharia said :

Even if the Government do not give any financial aid I am ready to educate my children so that they may learn something useful and develop and rise like you people.

Perception of Saharia women regarding utility of education is also not less than men. They also think high of education. As one of them said :

We want to educate our children so that they become intelligent, may be able to maintain account and can get job.

The main advantages of educating children reported by them were (i) general mental development and (ii) possibility of getting a job. A majority of the Saharias preferred job to labour and were crazy to settle their children in any kind of job. However, they did not show such a high interest in female education. One problem reported to be related with female education was that for such educated girls they had to find educated matches. It was also reported that educated Saharia boys demand beautiful match for them and have started seeing bride themselves before marriage, which was never a practice in the past.

Adoptation of Modern Medicine :

Like other tribes in India, Saharias also had in past their own concept of sickness and cure, which is still in practice to a considerable extent, specially among those Saharias who live in remote areas. It is a popular belief among Saharias that diseases and misfortunes are caused by hostile spirits, ghosts of the dead or by use of evil spiritual powers by enemies. That a disease which is caused by evil spirits can only be cured by spiritual powers is the main idea behind their system of treatment. Therefore, for all chronic and acute ailments they go to their witch doctors and *tantris*, locally called by different names like 'Jantry', 'Godala' i.e. god's representative. All problems like typhoid, tuberculosis, tetanus, pneumonia, small pox, polio, fits, etc., are considered to be caused by evil spirits and ghosts of the dead. For the remaining minor ailments they use herbal medicines which they prepare themselves from various plants found in the forests.

But the faith in spiritual concept of sickness is now on the decrease.. A substantial number of them go to the doctor for treatment of sickness but if sickness continues inspite of treatment they also seek help of sorcerers in chronic/cases. Sometimes, herbal treatment is also applied simultaneously, as said by a Saharia :

In past we always used to consult spiritual doctors for treatment of sickness. But now we have more faith in allopathic doctors. However, in few cases spiritual and herbal treatment also go side by side.

Among women, especially in remote areas, the faith in spiritual doctors is still high and they want to be treated by spiritual doctors. In one such village, all women whose children died, when asked about the cause of the death of their children, instead of telling about the disease of the child, said "Nothing had happened to him : witch has taken away our child". Under such circumstances, women's first choice would naturally be spiritual treatment. But this faith has started shaking is shown by their following statement :

We always believe that '*Jantry*' will treat our child, and that is why all of us first go to him. *Jantry* also assures that patient would get well. On this assurance our faith in him continues and we leave everything on him. This dependence and reliance on him leads to death of our children.

In contrast to this, men folk of this village reported that they generally consult allopathic doctors. But as their wives pressurise them to take the child to *Jantry*, they satisfy them by telling a lie that they had gone to *Jantry*.

To know the situation more clearly, treatment history of the sickness cases occurred during two years preceding the field survey was collected. Results are given in Table No. 2 :

TABLE No. 2
Type of treatment during sickness

<i>Type of treatment</i>	<i>No. of cases</i>
Total number of sickness cases in 98 families	50
No. treatment	5
Only herbal treatment	4
Herbal and Allopathic	29
Herbal, <i>tantric</i> and allopathic	12

Source : Field Work.

On the whole, it can be assumed that faith in witch doctors and sorcerers is declining and a large number of Saharias now consult allopathic doctors for the treatment of sickness. The awakening is slow in the interior and remote areas, especially where Saharias still have high faith in the treatment of sorcerers. The situation was perhaps best described by a middle aged Saharia who was also a member of Saharia Panchayat. He said :

The new generation is changing in the new light of modernization. But the older generation still adheres to old practices and restrains youngmen from adopting allopathic medicine and modern health care practices. It is only when *tantric* fail to cure the patient and his condition become from bad to worse that he is taken to the doctor for treatment.

Ideal Family Size

Saharia women indicated higher awareness regarding relationship between family size and happiness. They reported that a smaller family is a happier family and there should be 2 to 4 children in a happy family (See Table No. 3). When a young woman was asked why a family with many children cannot be happy, she replied :

When there are many children in the family we would not be able to fill their stomach. When our children are hungry shall not we feel unhappy ? When children and parents both are unhappy how that family can be called a happy family ?

Another woman reported :

Having many children is a problem these days. We need lot of money to feed, educate and clothe them. Then we have to marry them off. How these are possible in the days of high prices ? So 2-3 children are sufficient.

Table No. 3

Number of children considered ideal (N=30)

No. of children	No. of respondents
2	4
2—3	10
3	2
3—4	7
4	2
4—5	5
5 and above	0

Source : Field Work.

Of the 30 women interviewed, 17 were not desiring additional children. Of these 17 respondents, 5 had accepted sterilisation.

From the whole analysis, it is clear that various welfare works started by the Government have made Saharias aware of most of the present day problems and requirements. They are anxious to build their future. In spite of existence of such a high degree of awareness, progress in all fields is very slow, whether it is education or economic development. There are various factors responsible for it, most important of them being corruption in implementation of various schemes, and laziness among the Saharias.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL AWAKENING AMONG THE MINAS

V.S. BHATNAGAR

Mina is a numerically predominant tribe in Rajasthan (49.03%), followed by the Bhils (46.01%). The chief areas of Mina habitation in Rajasthan are Dhundhara, Khairada, Hadoti, Mewat, Mewar, Mevala, Mainala, Vagada, Godavada, Jalor, Merwada, Suwalak and Shekhawati. Their population distribution as per 1961 Census was highest in Jaipur district (2,2237), followed by Sawai Madhopur (2,24280), Udaipur (1,73367), Alwar (86008) and lowest in Jaisalmer (10). Out of the total Mina population of 11,55620, only 21,414 resided in the towns.

The Minas are regarded as the original inhabitants of the region from where they were driven away, or brought under subjection, by the Rajputs during the 7th to 10th century. They claim their descent from Matsya or *Mina avartārā*, one of the incarnations of Lord Vishnu as fish which saved Manu and the seeds of creation from deluge (*pralaya*). According to the tradition, they were once undisputed masters of the Mina-desh which comprised large portions of eastern Rajasthan. Sherring (1881) traces the origin of the Minas from the immigrant Rajputs and the aboriginal inhabitants of the country. According to Crooke (1870) Minas and Meos are of common origin and some regard Meo, Mewati, Mina being of the same group. The word Mewati means the resident of Mewat or Minawati.

Mina *Bahi-Bhat* or *Jāgā* speak of 12 *pals*, 32 *tadu* and 5200 *gotras* of the Minas. These *pals* have been named by some *Jāgās* after the Rajput clans and are depicted as the 12 Kshatriya clans viz. Chauhan, Parmar, Gahlot, Chandel, Kachhava, Yadava, Tanvara, Padihar, Nirvana, Gauda, Badgujar and Solanki. Another *Jaga* has given the *pals* territorial names such as Marudesh, Ajai Nagar, Maldesh, Hadadesh, etc. Even more obscure is the information about the 32 *tadas* of the Meenas. Muni Magan Sagar in his *Mina Purana* speaks of 32 *tadas* or septs of the Minas but has not described them. In *Kshatriya Mina Gotra Sangraha* by Thakur Ram Singh Norawat also, of the 5200 *gotras* mentioned in it, many are imaginary and repetition of the same *gotra* with some variation.

Though the Mians were dispossessed of the power by the Rajputs, they were, by and large, left in peaceful enjoyment of their agricultural lands and they lived as peaceful citizens enjoying their privileges and rights, and freedom to follow their own way of life and tribal customs. An instance of the harmonious relations between the Minas and their masters was the practice followed till a few decades ago, according to which a Mina put *tika* or mark of sovereignty on the forehead of a new ruler of Amber State and Mina chowkidar guarded the treasures which were shown even to the king only once in his life time at the time of his coronation.

The tradition of their past sovereignty, noble lineage, and position of trust under the State rule created among the Minas a sense of pride in their past and kept alive in their hearts hope of a brighter future. However, after the establishment of British sovereignty, their position deteriorated, no doubt partly due to the weakening of the state control over the feudal chiefs and partly due to deterioration in that feeling of mutual trust and respect between the ruler and the subjects which existed in earlier times.

The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 symbolised this change. It came into effect in Jaipur in August 1897. It was amended in 1923 and was applied to the whole of British India in 1924. The Jaipur Criminal Tribes Act of 1930 superseded the 1897 Law relating to the 'criminal tribes'.

The Act in certain areas inhabited by the Minas provided for registration of people of the criminal tribes. The police kept a record of their finger-prints. They were required to live in specified areas and had to report their presence twice in twenty-four hours. If they went outside, they had to take prior permission and had to inform the Panch and other officials the time of their arrival and departure whenever they visited a place. The punishment for violation of this rule was imprisonment upto three years and Rs. 500/- as fine. Senior police officers had the authority to imprison any Mina violating the provisions of this Act and there could be no appeal against it.

While the provisions of the Act were very harsh, some efforts were made for improving the conditions of the Minas, such as providing educational facilities and financial assistance to them, but as Shri Rawat Saraswat writes, these were more or less mere eye-wash to show to the social reformers that the Act aimed at reforming these tribes and improving their condition. Later, the Enquiry Committee on the Criminal Tribes Act in its report (1948) opined that if the States had taken measures for the improvement of the so-called criminal tribes, the

problem caused by them would have been solved by this time. But without introducing reform measures and continuing this Act, they would feel all the more the injustice done to them and they would become determined enemies of the government and peaceful society.

One unfortunate aspect of the Act was that whosoever was born in these 'criminal tribes', automatically came under the purview of this Act. It was thus a crime against innocent children who, by accident of birth, were born in these tribes. K.N. Katju rightly observed that it was an insult to God to do so. The Act had, generally speaking, unwholesome effect on the Minas, and the police harassment behind the shield of this Act compelled many to indulge in thieving and other crimes, some time with the connivance of the police itself, which got its share.

In the early phase of awakening among the Minas, the Act remained the foci of all attack and criticism by legal luminaries, social reformers and political leaders. As Shri M.S. Aney said, the Act helped criminal tendencies and Shri A.V. Thakhar, the Vice President of the All India Adim Jati Sewa Sangh, condemned the brutality inflicted by the Police on the Minas and other tribes which came under this Act. In 1936, Pandit Nehru severely criticised this Act and wanted it be torn off from the pages of the Law Book. Appeal was also made to the Congress Governments in the Provinces to remove the hardships caused by this Act. However, it was only in 1949 that a Committee held the Act violative of the Fundamental Rights granted in the Constitution and recommended its abolition.

We now turn our attention to the twin movements among the Minas indicating growing awakening among them as well as contributing to its growth. These were against the infamous Act and for removal of social evils among the Minas. These movements almost synchronised with the enforcement of the Act in the States in 1924.

Although it was difficult in those days to voice protest against the authority, some educated Minas formed Mina Jati Sudhar Samiti, and Chhotu Ram Jharwal and his colleagues, who had formed this Association to bring about reform in the Mina Society, undertook tour of the neighbouring areas to create awakening in their tribe by removing social evils and by spreading literacy among them. Among the reforms which they aimed to introduce were giving up liquor, singing of vulgar songs, and obscene dances. The members of the Sudhar Samiti went from village to village in the Dhundar region. They also tried to start *Chatshalas* in the villages. However, they did not come out strongly against the Criminal Tribes Act to avoid State reaction.

In 1942, at the Delhi Session of the Akhil Bhartiya Mina Kshatriya Mahasabha, twenty thousand Minas from different parts of the country assembled. The Mahasabha in its sessions not only discussed measures to introduce reforms in the Mina society, it also condemned in unequivocal terms the Criminal Tribes Act. The growing consciousness among the Minas now found a new impetus through the efforts of a Mina who had embraced Jainism and was now known as Muni Magan Sagar. He was a learned person and had a keen desire to create among the Minas sense of legitimate pride in their origin and past history. He composed in Sanskrit *Mina Purana* and travelled widely to create a sense of unity among the Minas.

In 1944, under the chairmanship of Muni Magan Sagar, a historic convention of Minas was held in which some of the prominent Prajamandal leaders also took part. The Criminal Tribes Act came under severe criticism in this convention. Though some of the prominent Minas who took part in it were put under arrest by the State authorities, *Satyagraha* was offered in Torawati and at Nayabas.

During the next 2-3 years, a number of conferences were held in which the problems faced by the Minas were discussed. What we note is that the Mina leaders were gradually trying to raise their issues at the conferences and conventions which were closely connected with the Congress movement in one way or the other and were spear-heading the struggle for political freedom. Thus in a conference held at Nidada—Bainada (Jaipur) under the Chairmanship of Rajendra Kumar Ajeya, it was resolved that a resolution regarding the problems being faced by the Minas should be passed at the Conference of All India Deshi Rajya Loka Parishad which was due to be held at Udaipur towards the end of 1945 under the Presidentship of Pandit Nehru. The Mina problem was raised in the Conference and a resolution was passed. The problem of the Minas was raised and discussed at a number of other conferences also such as Adivasi Sammelan at Udaipur (1945) and Jaipur Rajya Mina Kshatriya Mahasabha (1944-45). While signs of awakening among the Minas were unmistakable in the Dhundhar region, the same was not the case in other parts inhabited by the Minas. Also, the Criminal Tribes Act and the internal reforms in the Mina society were still the two foci round which were centered all the efforts of the Mina political leaders and the reformists.

During this period (1945-46) Muni Magan Sagar, called a conference of the Padihar Minas. At this Conference, besides discussing the problems concerning the Minas, it was also resolved to end the differ-

ence among the various Mina sub-castes. Thus Padihar Minas, hitherto, did not enter into matrimonial relations with other Mina classes. Similarly a conference was held at Pushkar in 1946 under the Chairmanship of Lakshmi Narain Jharwal, who played a prominent part in bringing about awakening among the Minas, and it was resolved at this Conference to end such practices which came in the way of social unity and equality among the different Mina classes. On this occasion, an idol of Matsy-avatar was also installed.

As Shri Rawat Saraswat says, behind all these attempts, the role of Jaipur Rajya Mina Sudhar Samiti was conspicuous and it was through its efforts that some eminent leaders of Rajasthan, including Hari Bhau Upadhyaya, Jwala Prasad Sharma, Hira Lal Shastri, Jai Narain Vyas, Ram Karan Joshi and others, extended co-operation to these bodies which were trying for the upliftment of the Mina community. The net result of these efforts, for the time being, was the abolition of Dadra rule and practice of calling Mina women for attendance at the police posts. In August 1946, in a Gazette, Extra-ordinary, Jaipur State announced some reforms but the Jaipur Rajya Mina Sudhar Samiti asked for full and equal citizenship rights for the Minas. In June 1947, effigy of the Criminal Tribes Act was burnt in Jaipur's Johri Bazar and the Minas decided to abstain from giving attendance at the police posts. Though some arrests were made, the Minas remained firm in their resolve. At this time the State Government, in co-operation with the Sudhar Samiti, formulated some schemes for economic improvement of the Mina community but soon the declaration of Independence was made, and the scheme remained still-born.

After the independence of the country and merger of the erstwhile Rajput States, the scope of activities of Jaipur Mina Sudhar Samiti was widened and it was renamed as Rajasthan Mina Sudhar Samiti. Besides it, there were many other bodies which were trying to bring about awakening among the Minas and aimed at improving their condition. Among these may be mentioned Mina Panchayat, Jaipur, Mina Kshatriya Mahasabha, Jaipur, Rajasthan Adivasi Mina Sudhar Sabha, Rajasthan Mina Parishad, Hadoti, Adivasi Mina Samajik Sudhar Mandal, Bundi, Hadoti Mina Sudhar Sangh, Bundi, Mina Aparadh Nivrati Samiti, Sikar, Akhil Bhartiya Mina Adivasi Sabha, Alwar, besides Madhyabharat Mina Sudhar Sabha, Gwalior, Mina Vikas Samiti, Indore etc. The Meos and Mers also organised meetings and conferences to bring about social reforms in their respective communities.

Besides these bodies, a number of journals also tried to create social awareness among the Minas. Among these may be mentioned *Matsya Samachar Patrika* (Gangapur—Sawai Madhopur), *Mina Veer* (Chhatari, Bulandshahr, U.P. 1938), *Swatantra Meena* (Pub. Akhil Bhartiya Mina Jatiya Mahasabha, Delhi). Another paper was published by Rawat Minas from Ajmer while Mina Sudhar Samiti, Jaipur published a bulletin named *Mukta Manava*.

After independence, all social inequalities came to an end. The old fears were gone and the minds of the people were now free. In the next three decades, a number of conferences were held, mainly for introducing social reforms in the Mina community. Thus in 1947, a conference was held in Jaipur on the occasion of the Teej fair in which it was resolved to abolish singing of vulgar songs and obscene dances performed by Mina men and women. In 1949, a large conference was held at Chaksu (Jaipur district) at Sheel Mata's temple in which about 50,000 Minas took part. In the conference it was decided to establish cordial relations between the Chamars and the Minas. Besides, it was decided to build a Mina Panchayati Dharamshala. In 1952 a number of conferences were held at different places (Toda Bhim, Sikrai, Manpura, Paldi, Ranoli) under the auspices of Rajasthan Mina Maha Panchayat, at which the need of bringing about social reforms among the Minas was the main theme. In a conference which took place at Guda village, it was resolved to work for the removal of blind beliefs prevalent in the Mina community. In Adivasi Mina Conference held at Jaipur, those present took oath not to sing obscene songs or to perform such dances and also vowed not to take liquor. In 1964 at a conference held at Lalgah (near Bassi), a resolution was passed for removing social evils still present in the Mina society. Mention may be made of two more conferences. In 1966 at a Conference in Bassi, in which *Jāgās* of the main clans participated, it was decided to prepare genealogical tables of all the *Gotras* among the Minas and to utilise these for writing history of the Minas. Also, in this year, a conference was held at Alwar in which ways and means to narrow the differences between the Meos and Minas were discussed and Mina-Meo Maha Panchayat was formed with head-office at Delhi. In some of these conferences, Congress leaders of Rajasthan, including Shri Mohan Lal Sukhadia, took part.

Besides the efforts made by the Mina leaders to create social awakening, the decision of the Government of India taken in 1956 to include the Minas among the Scheduled Tribes opened the way for multiple economic benefits, reservations, and concessions as well as welfare schemes which went a long way in improving the position of the Minas.

In terms of political say also, the Minas secured adequate representation in elected bodies from Parliament down to the Panchayat level.

In 1974, the prominent leaders of different Mina bodies met at Benada in Tehsil Bassi and took a number of decisions most of which were progressive and aimed at removal of social evils while one or two appeared to look backwards. The decisions provided for imposition of fines, varying according to ones involvement and responsibility, for performing *nukta* (death feast) on a conventional scale, drinking of liquor (fine of Rs. 101 for any other Mina but Rs. 1001/- for a Mina Patel or any other leading Mina). The conference also prohibited smoking by Mina women, group singing and dancing (fine of Rs. 11/- in case of breach) and participation of Mina women in fairs (fine Rs. 11/-). It was resolved to prohibit discrimination between Chokidar Mina and Zamindar Mina (fine Rs. 101/- for violation). Abduction of another man's wife and committing thefts were also prohibited and amount of penalty was laid down in case of breach. Attempt was also made to mitigate the financial loss which the boy's side had to suffer due to divorce or remarriage, common among the Minas. It was also laid down that every Mina family will send its children to schools (fine for breach Rs. 11/-).

Apparently, the Mina community was now quite well awake and keen not to be left behind in any way.

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